

TUSSOCK TIMES

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Tim Johnston promoting the awareness at the Maude Trash'n Treasure Market (VSTWP).

VSTWP SPRINGS INTO ACTION IN MAUDE

The Maude & District Landcare Group has received assistance from the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) for a 'discretionary' extension project area. This differs from other VSTWP extension projects as the Maude project does not lie within the 'core' area of VSTWP activities, even though significant serrated tussock infestations are known to exist in the region.

VSTWP Extension Officer Tim Johnston launched the Maude Extension Project at the Annual Maude Trash'n Treasure event in May 2017. The Maude project covers 23 properties over an area of 1,260 hectares and comprises

productive agricultural enterprises, smaller hobby farms and land set aside for conservation.

Tim has been actively building the capacity of landowners to manage serrated tussock by offering free inspections and providing management advice to landowners.

Tim says that "despite previous Agriculture Victoria compliance activities in the region earlier in the decade, and the on-going promotion of serrated tussock control by the local Landcare group, some significant serrated tussock infestations still exist in the region". (cont. on page 2)

VSTWP SPRING INTO ACTION (CONTINUED)

Tim advises that the key problem areas are on the steep sloping country along Sutherland Creek West branch, and highlight the importance of getting tailored advice. "These areas contain difficult to managed unimproved pastures and can be a challenge to access by vehicle. Serrated tussock can get out of control in these areas if land managers are not aware of the consequences of this invasive weed, or if they do not have an appropriate management strategy in place."

Tim explains that the "the Golden Sun Moth is known to inhabit some of these areas, so management for serrated tussock needs to take into consideration the life cycle of this critically endangered species".

This VSTWP project compliments the great work undertaken by the Maude and District Landcare Group and is a friendly reminder that serrated tussock control requires constant and on-going vigilance.

VSTWP EDUCATE AT FIELD DAYS

The VSTWP have manned stalls at the ever-popular Maffra Agricultural Show in October and the Whittlesea Agricultural Show during November and assisted many landowners with best practice Serrated Tussock management.

The stalls featured the usual array of extension information on how to identify and best manage serrated tussock, as well as expert advice to assist with identification attributes.

Both days were massive successes with Community Representatives Alan Morton, John Burgess and Lance Jennison doing an excellent job in spreading the word about infestations in the region. Pictured below is Clint & Michelle Slothers from Stratford.

The VSTWP also had an enjoyable and educational day at the Whittlesea Agricultural Society Show, with two dedicated VSTWP Community Representatives offering information to the public on serrated tussock.

Pictured below is our Chairperson and long standing tussock champion, John Burgess (left), and the ever-keen Lance Jennison (right). The stall was well received by the community, who had many questions about how to best identify the noxious weed and suitable control methods.



The next event we will attend is the Ballan Autumn Festival on 18 March 2018. Come say hello!

TACKLING TUSSOCK TURMOIL

Through a joint effort between landowners, Wellington Shire Council and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), a control program is occurring in the Avon River area, to assist in reducing the spread of the serrated tussock.

This unwelcome plant is a declared noxious weed in Victoria, it is highly invasive and impacts local farms and the natural environment. Serrated tussock is a serious weed of pasture whose seed heads are carried along the ground or blown considerable distances through the air.

Wellington Shire Council General Manager Built and Natural Environment, Chris Hastie says: "The presence of the serrated tussock has a significant impact on the agricultural and farming community. The major environmental impacts pose a significant risk, with the serrated tussock out competing many native and endangered grass species. Its presence also greatly affects land value. "Management and extermination of this high threat plant could save farmers time and money in lost farming and control costs if we can stop the spread early on."

Livestock are unable to digest the plant due to its high fibre and low protein content, resulting in a loss of condition and in extreme cases starvation. Wool quality can also be substantially reduced due to the presence of the serrated tussock seeds.

Council contractors will be working along road sides in the coming weeks, as part of its annual control program, as the Shire ramps up its efforts to work towards eradication of this invasive species.

Council encourages all landholders in Gippsland to follow the directions of the DEDJTR compliance notices and complete serrated tussock control within the advised timeframes.

Further information is available from <http://bit.ly/serratedtussock> or by contacting Council's Land and Natural Resources Coordinator on 1300 366 244.



Serrated tussock plants treated with selective herbicide

BECOME A VSTWP COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE

VSTWP Committee Members represent the Interests of landowners and community groups in their area. They have input into VSTWP extension programs in the region, and are able to contribute to the strategic direction of serrated tussock management in Victoria.

Committee Members are able to contribute through attendance at meetings, teleconference can be arranged.

The VSTWP are seeking more interest from outside of the core area of serrated tussock which is to the west of Melbourne.

For more information about being a VSTWP Committee Member please download a PDF copy of the Addendum to the By-Laws here [LINK](#) or email the VSTWP Executive Officer, Martin Deering on: martin.deering@ecodev.vic.gov.au



WEED DNA BARCODE BREAKTHROUGH

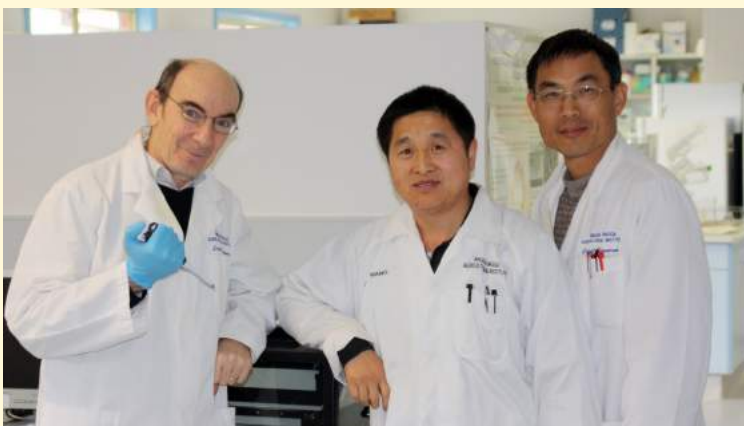
Identification of DNA barcodes for serrated tussock and Chilean needle grass has delivered a new approach to better manage incursions of two of Australia's major invasive weeds.

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) scientist, David Gopurenko, said identification of the DNA barcodes by a team of NSW DPI researchers will make it easier to distinguish the weeds from the native grasses they grow alongside in eastern Australia.

"For the first time we have the potential to develop a timely and easy way to distinguish between invasive and native grasses at early growth stages," Dr Gopurenko said.

"DNA barcoding gives us the opportunity to shortcut the traditional identification process, which usually requires examination of the plants' flowers, which can only take place once the plant has reached maturity. "Now we have the ability to better manage new incursions by identifying weeds before they mature, flower and become established."

Correct identification of invasive and native grasses is crucial in weed management. Misidentification delays the control of invasive weeds and also lead to the unwanted eradication of desirable native grass. DNA barcoding can accurately identify species from a small sample, including trace amounts of degraded tissue which has not been stored properly.



NSW Department of Primary Industries scientists, David Gopurenko, Aisuo Wang and Hanwen Wu (NSW DPI)

CONTRIBUTIONS AND FEEDBACK

The VSTWP would like to thank the following people for contributing to this edition of the Tussock Times:

Ivan Carter (VSTWP), Tim Johnston (VSTWP), NSW Department of Primary Industries

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party welcomes your contributions and feedback.

For contributions, feedback or to be added to or removed from the mailing list, please contact:

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In our efforts to reduce the number of newsletters being printed if you currently receive a hardcopy of this newsletter but have access to email please send your email address to the Executive Officer.

More information on serrated tussock can be found on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party website: www.serratedtussock.com or by contacting the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

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Bacchus Marsh Victoria, Australia Summer 2017.

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