

# Uniting against Serrated Tussock

## Field Day at 'Yoorooga'

THE noxious weed serrated tussock clearly worries many local people.

Some 60 of them turned out for the Tussock Tamers serrated tussock information afternoon at Tony Cooke's property Yoorooga in the Ladevale district recently. The Tussock Tamers project is an initiative of the Jerrawa Creek Landcare Group which is managing it in partnership with the Upper Lachlan Shire Council (ULSC) and Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (LCMA).

This project aims to reinvigorate the effort of everybody in the Gunning area to reduce the serious environmental and economic effects of this noxious weed.

The field day was organised to help newcomers to the land to learn more about identifying serrated tussock and for everyone to increase their skills and knowledge on control options.

And while it certainly did this quite successfully, it also exposed the simmering anger that can result from perceived failures on the part of neighbours and local authorities to control this environmental menace.

Ladevale, like everywhere else in the Gunning district, has infestations of serrated tussock to greater and lesser extents on many properties.

One of the keynote speakers at the field day, Council Senior Weeds Manager Paul Brown, outlined the extent of the serrated tussock problem and the latest on control measures.

He began by confessing that a weeds inspector's lot was not always a happy one - it was akin to being a city parking inspector reviled by all he fined.

But it soon became apparent that a weed inspector's job could be even worse! City parking inspectors were not berated by bystanders for not fining offenders often or hard enough.

Yet this is the position Paul found himself in on the day.

## Serrated Tussock - A major problem

PAUL very ably dealt with the tussock problem and control measures.

However, much of his time was spent responding to persistent questioning about what a number of Ladevale locals felt was the source of all their serrated tussock woes.

An unnamed property, but one obviously known to all the locals, was said to be the cause of the Ladevale

serrated tussock invasion.

And, shouted the Council's critics, nothing has been done about this problem. "What's going on?" they demanded to know.

Their questions and concerns were understandable. They felt that a hard council "punish the tussock traffickers and turn the tussocks back" policy should have been implemented. But, as Paul explained, the situation is not so clear and simple.

He believes the council is "tough on tussock" but its strong preference is to work with land managers to control the problem wherever possible.

Volunteers are usually more willing than conscripts so it is better to work co-operatively on tussock control rather than punish people immediately. Punitive measures are certainly used but not as the first line of defence.

Further, privacy constraints prevent Council revealing to the public what its dealings with individual land managers have been on the serrated tussock problem.

Neighbours' perceptions that "nothing has been done" are often unfair to both the property concerned and the Council.

This seems to be the case in this instance as Gunning News can reveal that Council and the particular Ladevale property have made significant efforts to control the problem.

Further, Gunning News understands that Council will be doing pre-arranged inspections in this area in the very near future.

Private talk between people at the field day suggest the situation in Ladevale is typical of the Gunning district.

There are many properties affected by the weed.

It can be a very visible problem and become the cause of discord and resentment among neighbours. Some feel our council should be more rigorous in managing outbreaks. Others believe too many land managers are not working to control outbreaks on their properties.

Many experienced people believe that, despite years of effort, the problem is getting worse.

## Can we make a difference?

CAN we make a difference to serrated tussock problem? Jerrawa Creek Landcare and its partners in the Tussock Tamer project are sure we can.

And that's a subject for a future edition of this column.

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