

# Fears of tussock takeover

THE State Opposition's agriculture spokesman Duncan Gay MLC and Member for Goulburn Pru Goward say they are determined to make serrated tussock a big issue for the Southern Tablelands following a meeting with local farmers recently.

Serrated tussock is recognised as the biggest threat to agriculture in Southern Australia and a flupropanate resistant variety could spell disaster for both grazing enterprises and the environment.

Local NSW Farmers Association president Margaret Cameron presented a 10 point plan to the meeting that included empowering local government to take action against farmers who were not pulling their weight. It also required state government land-owning authorities to responsibly control infestations on crown land.

"It (the plan) needs to be costed and evaluated as a matter of priority before serrated tussock wipes out the best pasture country in NSW," Ms Goward said.

"With the coming world food shortages we cannot afford to have western pasture lands run down and farmers walk off their land."

The meeting was told that up to 600,000 hectares in NSW were infest-

ed with serrated tussock and urgent action was required to control known flupropanate resistant serrated tussock thriving on five local properties before seed dispersal later this year.

Breadalbane grazier Tony Morrison called for more research as did local Farmers Association representative Alix Turner, who said while biological agents were a way of controlling Tussock, this had not been successful.

"We have to commit to further research. Even a form of rust would be a great step forward if it infected the grass and debilitated its growth," Mr Turner said.

Local farmer David Cooper told Duncan Gay how quickly serrated tussock had spread in the Southern Tablelands in the past 10 years of drought, linking the spread to fierce winds, lack of winter rain and the absence of competing plants.

Speaking after the meeting Mr Gay agreed action was urgently needed.

"The NSW Government has to act urgently before another bad season allows Tussock to take over. We need a concerted campaign in a vulnerable catchment area and wide-spread planting of a competing plant species at the same time," he said.