

## **Annotated timeline**

**50 years of giant rat's tail grass (*Sporobolus natalensis* and *Sporobolus pyramidalis*) in Queensland.**

**19 April 2017**

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## Summary

This annotated timeline was compiled from records held by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, reports and scientific papers prepared by staff of various Queensland Government departments.

Entries in the timeline have been colour coded as follows.

Year	Issue	Comments
XXXX	Taxonomic issues	Years in which taxonomic issues were raised or resolved.
XXXX	National policy	Years in which National Policy was formulated or changed.
XXXX	Local Laws	Years in which local laws were proposed, passed, commenced or significant amendments made.
XXXX	Queensland legislation	Years in which Queensland legislation was passed, commenced or significant amendments made.
XXXX	Queensland policy	Years in which Queensland policy was formulated or changed.
XXXX	Impacts and spread	Years in which significant new or growing concerns were raised by community, local government or industry about the actual or potential impacts of giant rat's tail grass and/or calls for government assistance.
XXXX	R&D - Biological control research	Years in which significant research activity; advances occurred or hurdles were encountered.
XXXX	R&D - Herbicide control research	Years in which significant research activity; advances occurred or hurdles were encountered.
XXXX	R&D - Management strategy research	Years in which significant research activity; advances occurred or hurdles were encountered.
XXXX	Major Publication	A major publication about giant rat's tail grass.
XXXX	Education and Awareness	Years in which education and awareness publications were produced or revised.
XXXX	Community based action	Years in which significant local community based action occurred or funding received to control giant rat's tail grass.

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## Timeline - 1969 to present

Year	Issue	Comments
1969	Introduction & Identity	First Queensland record of giant rat's tail grass <i>Sporobolus natalensis</i> (BRI AQ0306672) collected at North Deep Creek via Gympie on 11 June 1969.
1974	Introduction & Identity	Second Queensland record of giant rat's tail grass <i>Sporobolus natalensis</i> (BRI AQ0306463) collected along Brisbane-Mt Nebo Road 3km from the Gap, Brisbane on 25 July 1974.
1979	Introduction & Identity	First Queensland record of giant rat's tail grass <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> (BRI AQ0314842) collected at Cathay Creek on 12 February 1979.
1980	Introduction & Identity	Second Queensland record of giant rat's tail grass <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> (BRI AQ0411979) collected at 18 March 1980 at South Bundaberg.
1983	Introduction & Identity	Both giant rat's tail grass collected on one Miriam Vale property on 4 July 1983.
1986	Industry concern	Correspondence from National Council of the Cattleman's Union to Stock Routes and Rural Land Protection Board "That the Stock Routes and Rural Lands Protection Board and CSIRO investigate a way to eradicate <i>Sporobolus</i> as it is now a major problem throughout the Burnett"
1986	State Policy	Stock Routes and Rural Land Protection Board meeting 14/15 May resolved that a survey be undertaken to establish the extent of the infestations
1986	Queensland Legislation	Giant rat's tail grass is not regulated in Queensland. <i>Rural Lands Protection Act 1985</i> commences 1 July 1986, lists pest plants in five categories with the following management requirements. P1 – The introduction of these plants into Queensland is prohibited. P2 – These plants are to be destroyed in the whole of Queensland unless otherwise stipulated. P3 – Distribution of these plants in the area of infestation is to be reduced, in the whole of Queensland unless otherwise stipulated P4 – These plants are to be prevented from spreading beyond the places in which they occur, namely the Local Authorities of major infestation. P5 – Particular action should be taken in relation to those plants on land in that area that is land under the control of a Government Department or a local Authority
1989	Education and awareness	Weed Bulletin - <i>Sporobolus</i> Giant Rat's Tail Grass and its control. Published by the Queensland Department of Lands March 1989.
1989	State Policy	The September 1989 meeting of Rural Land Protection Board considered a report prepared for the Declared Plants Consultative Committee about <i>Sporobolus</i> grass issues. Moved (nominee of DPI), seconded (nominee of the Cattlemen's Union) – "That the Board write to the Director General, Department of primary Industries, indicating extreme concern at the potential of <i>Sporobolus</i> to invade coastal grasslands and render them unproductive and seeks Departmental assistance in developing management Strategies to minimise the effects of this pest as a matter of urgency". Moved (nominee of Cattlemen's Union), seconded (nominee of the Queensland Dairyfarmer's State Council) – "That the Board request the Department of Primary industries to have <i>Sporobolus</i> categorised as a declared seed under the Agricultural Standards Regulations". Moved (nominee of DPI), seconded (nominee of the Cattlemen's Union) – "That the Board develop a 'Red Alert' list of non-declared plants which it views as a serious threat to primary production and that it actively promote public awareness of this list". And "That <i>Sporobolus</i> to place on this list and information is disseminated to Local Authorities, organisations and landholders where <i>Sporobolus</i> infestations are known to be present."
1989	Industry concern	Various industry organisations raise concerns about giant rat's tail grass including Bundaberg Branch Local Government Association, Cattlemen's Union and local graziers from near Gympie.
1989	Major publication	Report Giant rat's tail grass in Queensland prepared by Department of Primary Industries 12 September 1989.
1989	Local laws	Calliope Shire Council proposes to declare <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> under local by-laws.

Year	Issue	Comments
1990	Education and awareness	Information about giant rat's tail grass and the Rural Lands Protection Board's decisions sent to the 69 Local Authorities with known or suspected infestations.
1990	Education and awareness	Central Queensland AgNotes on <i>Sporobolus</i> grasses published February 1990.
1990	Education and awareness	Weed ALERT jointly published by the Department of Lands and Department of Primary Industries.
1990	Education and awareness	Weed alert campaign in regional media.
1991	State Policy	The May 1991 meeting of Rural Lands Protection Board again rejects declaration of giant rat's tail grass because <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not enough information is known about the plant</li> <li>2. There are no available selective herbicide to control a grass within a grass sward</li> <li>3. It is a pasture management problem best controlled by fertilization and planting of improved pastures, followed by herbicide control</li> <li>4. Enforcement of declaration by Local Authorities would be impractical because of the lengthy (3-4 years) and integrated approach to control which is necessary.</li> </ol>
1991	Education and awareness	Letter sent to affected Councils urging positive identification, spot spraying on Council land and urging landholders to undertake control. Various responses from Beaudesert (Beaudesert Shire was drought declared 23/09/1991 to 2/03/1992), Noosa (drought declared 14/10/1991 to 2/03/1992), Maroochy (drought declared 23/09/1991 to 2/03/1992), Cardwell, Whitsunday (drought declared 25/10/1991 to 1/03/1993), Duaringa Shires (drought declared 14/10/1991 to 10/04/1992).
1991	R&D – Management strategy research	17 July 1991 Inter-Departmental Working Group Department of Lands and Department of Primary Industries - issues resolving taxonomy, awareness campaign & weed alert, spread in pasture seed, herbicide spraying trials. "Giant rat's tail grass often found where Katomboro Rhodes grass or Kazungula <i>Setaria</i> imported from Africa were planted during the 1960s."
1991	R&D – Herbicide control research	The Agricultural Requirements Board approves use of Frenock for giant rat's tail grass control.
1991	Education and awareness	Agdex 641 August 1991 published jointly by the Department of Lands and Department of Primary Industries. 3000 printed and 1500 distributed to coastal and sub-coastal local government authorities.
1991	Local government concerns	Kilkivan Shire requests that giant rat's tail grass be declared P5 in its area as "Local Authorities should be leading the way." (Kilkivan Shire was drought declared 23 Sep 1991 till 2 Mar 1992).
1991	Local government concerns	Kilcoy Shire requests that giant rat's tail grass is declared a noxious weed. (Kilcoy Shire was drought declared 23 Sep 1991 till 2 Mar 1992)
1991	State Policy	The October 1991 meeting of the Rural Lands Protection Board reconsiders earlier decision not to declare giant rat's tail grass. Motion in response to letter from the Shire of Kilkivan. Moved (nominee of the Queensland Dairyfarmers' State Council) and seconded (Nominee of the Cattlemen's Union) – "That the Board endorses the declaration of giant rat's tail grass in P4 category in the State" was carried.
1991	Local government concerns	Bundaberg District Local Government Association meeting carries a resolution "that the State Government provide additional funding for research purposes for the control and destruction for the weed pest – rat's tail grass"
1992	Local government concerns	Gooburrum Shire Council calls for declaration of giant rat's tail grass as P2 (Gooburrum Shire was drought declared 23 Sep 1991 till 2 Mar 1992). Request is supported by the Woongarra Shire Council (Woongarra Shire was drought declared 23 Sep 1991 till 2 Mar 1992).

Year	Issue	Comments
1992	State policy	Proposal for declaration of giant rat's tail grass approved by Minister for Land Management and by Minister for Primary Industries.
1992	Local government concerns	Kolan Shire Council calls for declaration of giant rat's tail grass. (Kolan Shire was drought declared 23 Sep 1991 till 2 Mar 1992).
1992	R&D - Biological control research	Meat Research Corporation (MRC) approves funds for project in the area of biological control.
1992	Education and awareness	"Spring Valley" Gympie - giant rat's tail grass Field Walk & Debate "Controlling giant rat's tail grass during pasture establishment" held May 1992.
1992	State Legislation	9 July 1992 Order in Council Category P4 plants –These plants are to be prevented from spreading beyond the places in which they occur throughout the whole of Queensland - Giant rat's tail grass <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> Published in the Queensland Government Gazette 10 <sup>th</sup> July 1992 No. 92 Page 2286.
1992	Education and awareness	Department advises all local authorities that declaration covered the two subspecies <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> spp. <i>pyramidalis</i> and <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> spp. <i>jacquemontii</i>
1992	Education and awareness	Joint field day hosted by Kilkivan Shire Council and Department of Lands at Boobyjan, north of Tansey in that Shire.
1992	Education and awareness	Ministerial press release "Giant rat's tail grass" from Minister for Land Management.
1992	State Policy	Rural Lands Protection Board resolved "that a combined task force be developed with the Department of Primary Industries and other interested parties for an urgent collaborative effort to be mounted on giant rat's tail grass."
1992	Education and awareness	"Team attacks weed menace" News-Mail (Bundaberg, Qld) 22 Aug 1992
1991-94	Education and awareness	Producer demonstration sites Bundaberg, Mackay and Gympie established by Department of Primary Industries, funded in part by Meat Research Corporation (MRC).
1993	State Policy	Joint Department of Lands/Department of Primary Industries Giant Rat's Tail Grass meeting to establish a collaborative approach and establish an interdepartmental working group to develop a project plan for giant rat's tail grass control in Queensland.
1993	R&D - Herbicide control research	The Agricultural Requirements Board approves use of glyphosate in "wick wipers" for giant rat's tail grass control.
1993	Education and awareness	"Fortland" Field Day held at Beaudesert on 24 Feb 1993.
1993	Education and awareness	Giant rat's tail grass Field Day held at Woodford.
1993	State Policy	Giant Rat's Tail Grass Co-ordinating group meeting. Membership expanded to include University of Queensland, Department of Environment and Heritage, agribusiness, primary producers, and local government.
1993	Local Laws	Isis Shire Council proposes a by-law to declare giant rat's tail grass a noxious weed in the Shire for the purpose of eradication rather than control. (Isis Shire was drought declared 23 Sep 1991 till 2 Mar 1992).
1993	Local government concerns	Kilkivan Shire calls for declaration category to be amended from P4 to P3.

Year	Issue	Comments
1993	Local government concerns	Bundaberg District Local Government Association queries policies and programmes to thoroughly police the P4 category. Department recommends a 10 meter buffer strip along property boundaries for heavily infested properties.
1993	Education and awareness	Department of Primary Industries News Release “Drought stricken producers warned on giant rat’s tail grass”
1993	Local Laws	Newspaper article “Widgee bans rat’s tail in subdivisions” The Gympie Times (Gympie, Qld) 2 Jun 1993 page 2. It is claims that “90% of Rhodes grass seed contaminated with giant rat’s tail grass”.
1993	Local government concerns	3 June 1993 Widgee Shire Council requests that giant rat’s tail grass declaration category be amended to P3. (Widgee Shire was drought declared 23 Sep 1991 till 2 Mar 1992).
1993	Industry concerns	Graziers Association of South-Eastern Queensland requests that giant rat’s tail grass be declare a category P3 plant.
1993	Education and awareness	Department of Primary Industries advice for approved fodders under Drought Relief Assistance Scheme – “Approved Charitable Organisations’ are expected” ...” to be aware of the implication of spread of noxious weeds” ... “particularly in relation to freedom from contamination by giant rat’s tail grass on the coastal belt”.
1993	Industry concerns	A letter to editor from the giant rat’s tail grass coordinating group challenging assertion about contaminated seed lots published in the Gympie Times (Gympie, Qld) 9 Jun 1993 page 7 and article “Contaminated hay warning” in the Gympie Times (Gympie, Qld) 9 June 1993 page 10.
1993	Industry concerns	Maroochy Landcare calls for declaration category to be upgraded to P1 or P2.
1993	Local government concerns	Maroochy Shire calls for declaration category to be upgraded to P1 or P2.
1993	Local government concerns	Maryborough City Council supports the declaration of giant rat’s tail grass as a category P3 plant
1993	Local government concerns	North Coast Local Government Association supports Widgee Shire Councils call to re-categorise giant rat’s tail grass from P4 to P3.
1993	Education and awareness	Three-day giant rat’s tail grass training workshop for department of lands and key local government staff.
1993	State Policy	Rural Lands Protection Board meeting resolved “that any proposal for a change of categorisation would await the holding of a workshop in Bundaberg, and a pest status assessment scheduled to be completed during January 1994”.
1993	Industry concerns	Southeast Queensland Regional Beef Research Committee recommends change of status of giant rat’s tail grass from P4 to P2.

Year	Issue	Comments
1994	State Policy	<p>Pest Status Assessment Recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heightened awareness of giant rat's tail grass and its control by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting greater familiarisation of giant rat's tail grass by Department of Lands, Department of Primary Industries and Local government officers</li> <li>Production of coloured identification leaflet</li> <li>Increasing the number of surveys for infestations by Department of Lands and Local government officers</li> <li>Producing an information brochure detailing management and control</li> <li>Holding regional training workshops</li> </ul> </li> <li>Minimise spread by enforcing control under the <i>Rural Lands Protection Act 1985</i> by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining declaration category of P4 for coastal and subcoastal areas</li> <li>Changing declaration category to P2 for the remainder of the State.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Provide assistance to land holders and Local Governments by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of further purchases of "pressurised wick wipers" for hire to land holders</li> <li>Assistance by Local Government weed officers to control small outbreaks of giant rat's tail grass on properties.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Provision of further funding of research on giant rat's tail grass by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determining potential resources within Government</li> <li>Application for external funding</li> <li>Interdepartmental submission to Treasury</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
1994	State Policy	Rural Lands Protection Board endorsed the recommendations and resolved that <i>S. pyramidalis</i> and <i>S. natalensis</i> be declared in category P3 in all east coast catchments with the exception of the Shires of Dalrymple, Belyando, Jericho, Peak Downs, Emerald, Bauhinia, Taroom and the northern sections of Bungil and Chinchilla and Category P2 for the remainder of the State".
1994	State Legislation	Executive Council approves Rural Lands Protection Amendment Regulation (No 2) 1994. Gazetted 14 October 1994. Giant rat's tail grass ( <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> and <i>S. natalensis</i> ) P3 Catchment areas of all east coast river systems (other than Shires of Dalrymple, Belyando, Jericho, Peak Downs, Emerald, Bauhinia, Taroom, Bungil and Chinchilla) shown on the catchments areas map. P2 Remainder of the State.
1994	Community concern	The Caves Landcare Group calls for a pasture seed certification system.
1995	Local government	Miriam Vale Shire Council requires that a "buffer zone of 20 meters must be maintained inside all property boundaries for all declared plants".
1995 - 1998	R&D - Management strategy research	<p>A jointly funded project \$450,000 (Department of Primary Industries, Department of Lands, NSW Agriculture and the University of Queensland) commenced in 1995. Two focus areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research into the ecology and lifecycle of giant rat's tail grass to determine its weaknesses and strengths so that more targeted control measures can be developed and applied</li> <li>Increase awareness of the weed and its control strategies through an Action and Awareness Campaign.</li> </ol> <p>Meat Research Corporation Project Ecology Management and Control of Giant rat's tail grass (DAQ 106) Dairy Research and Development Corporation funding National Landcare Program – Project 952129: "Extension and awareness of giant rat's tail grass" to Giant Rat's Tail Grass Producer Advisory Group (GRTPAG). Department of Primary Industries provided the "Awareness and Action Campaign" 1995/96 \$47 000, 1996/97 \$48 500 and \$1997/98 \$50 000 via a subcontract to the grant recipients GRTPAG.</p>
1996	Education and awareness	A workshop Weedy Sporobolus grasses: Current knowledge and future directions held a Gympie, February 1996.

Year	Issue	Comments
1997	Community concern	Community concerns are raised about the presence and control of giant rat's tail grass in State forests.
1998	National Policy	Queensland Government nominated giant rat's tail grass as a candidate weed of national significance (WONS) during the initial assessment process. Giant rat's tail grass did not rank in the top 20.
1998	Industry concern	The State Council of the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (Feb 1998) resolved "that in the view of the spread of giant rat's tail grass, the level of control in areas of scattered infestations be tightened up."
1998	State Policy	Department of Natural Resources Policy "Control of giant rat's tail grass" dated 19 March 1998 1. In areas declared P3, and in any other parts of the State where heavy infestations occur – that is, infestations that are well-beyond complete short-term destruction, the Department will:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require that the spread of giant rat's tail grass be minimised by control of isolated and strategically important infestations.</li> <li>In the case of a property where an infestation abuts on a relatively clean property, road or watercourse, require that spread of seed be minimised by buffer strip treatment along such boundaries, as well as treatment of lanes and access tracks.</li> <li>Provide information on control strategies and best practice management (in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries).</li> </ul> 2. In areas declared P2, the Department will:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require eradication of all infestations, except in the case of heavy infestations (as agreed or identified by the Department) where the level of control should be as per paragraph 1.</li> <li>Increase awareness of giant rat's tail grass, its identification, impacts and means of spread.</li> </ul> 3. In all areas, the Department will:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where warranted and resources are available, collaborate with a Local Government in providing on-ground assistance to landholders in the initial control of small infestations.</li> <li>Provide pressurised wick-wiper applicators to Local Governments (to be available for loan to landholders) for the control of small infestations, strategic portions of large infestations and for the establishment of clean buffer strip areas.</li> <li>Encourage Local Governments to acquire such equipment using their own funds wherever possible.</li> </ul> 4. The Department will collaborate with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries to develop best practice management options, where feasible, through research.
1998	Education and awareness	PP48 May 1998 revision
1998	Community concerns	Question on Notice No. 501 asked on 6/8/98. Mr Stephan (Member for Gympie) asked the Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Palaszczuk) With reference to the continuing threat of giant rat tail grass in many parts of Queensland— (1) Will he continue the program started by previous Governments to control this threat to large areas of grassland? (2) What program does he consider will best achieve this goal? ANSWER: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/1998/980915QN.PDF">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/1998/980915QN.PDF</a>
1999	Education and awareness	Ministerial media release "Bringing down Giant Rats Tail Grass" Minister for Environment and Heritage and Natural Resources Hon. Rod Welford
1999	Education and awareness	Media article "Government steps up battle against weed" News-Mail (Bundaberg, Qld) 7 September 1999 page 4.
1999	Industry concern	Agforce proposes a \$17.9 Million 5-year project to strategically contain giant rat's tail grass by eradicating the weed from 75,000 ha of smaller dispersed outbreaks and controlling the balance of 125 000 ha in the larger areas. Seeks Qld Government for submission to MLA and Australian Government.
1999	Education and awareness	Media release "Government Gives Priority to Giant Rat's Tail Grass Strategy" from Minister for Environment and Heritage and Natural Resources.

Year	Issue	Comments
1999	Education and awareness	Media article "State weighs into giant rat's tail grass war" Queensland Country Life 23 September 1999 (see Figure 5 below)
1999	Identity	Taxonomists from the Queensland Herbarium and New South Wales National Herbarium develop morphological key for all <i>Sporobolus</i> species in Australia. (See Simon and Jacobs 1999).
1999	Major Publication	Giant rats tail grass Best Practice Manual Compiled by the giant rat's tail grass project team published by Department of Primary Industries with funding by Department of Primary Industries, QDNR, Dairy Research and Development Corporation, National Landcare Program and Meat & Livestock Australia
1999	Industry concern	5 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1999 A meeting of rural industry, local government and state government representatives was held in Rockhampton to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the Agforce proposal</li> <li>2. Progress the State giant rat's tail grass strategy.</li> </ol>
1999	Industry concern	Media Article "Cattlemen seek allies in giant rat's tail grass war" Queensland Country Life 21 Oct 1999.
1999	Education and awareness	Ministerial media statement "Manual spearheads fight against giant rat's tail" by the Hon Henry Palaszczuk, Minister for Primary Industries.
1999	Community based action	19 Nov 1999 Weedy Sporobolus grasses research update workshop held at Gympie. An ad hoc steering committee leads to formation of "Introduced Sporobolus Grasses Steering Committee" to develop a giant rat's tail grass strategy.
1999	Major Publication	19 Nov 1999 Launch of the Giant Rat's Tail Grass Best Practice Manual by Hon. Henry Palaszczuk, Minister for Primary Industries at Kingaroy.
1999	Industry concern	Production of the herbicide "Frenock" discontinued by original manufacturer considerable disruption to supply until new plant commissioned overseas.
2000	Community based action	Workshop held in Rockhampton (29 Feb to 1 Mar 2000) to develop a national strategy based on the WONS strategies as a model, scope expanded to include all five weedy Sporobolus grasses. Participation of representatives of Department of Lands, Department of Primary Industries, industry groups, local government and community.
2000	Community concerns	Articles in regional newspapers reporting on the workshop, strategy development and giant rat's tail grass problem. (See Figure 6.)
2000	State Strategy	Draft of the Weedy Sporobolus Grass Strategy released to workshop participants.
2000	State Strategy	Consultation draft of the Weedy Sporobolus Grass Strategy released to wider stakeholders.
2000	State Strategy	Consultation draft of the Weedy Sporobolus Grass Strategy 2000-2005 tabled by Mr Lester during Committee on the Appropriations Bill 24 Aug 2000.
2000	Community concerns	Question On Notice No. 930 24 August 2000. Mr Lester (Member for Keppel) asked the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources (Mr Welford) <p>Is he aware of the continuous spread of giant rat-tail grass and the absolute and total devastation this grass is having on properties in Queensland?</p> <p>Is he aware that this grass has the capacity to spread not only from north to south coastal Queensland but also to western Queensland?</p> <p>In view of this and the concern expressed at a seminar held in Rockhampton recently on the subject, will he outline his latest proposals to rid Queensland of this dreadful curse that has the capacity to severely devalue the economy of rural Queensland?</p> <p>Answer: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2000/001017qn.pdf">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2000/001017qn.pdf</a></p>
2000	Community based action	Formation of Weedy Sporobolus Grasses Management Group to drive and implement the Weedy Sporobolus Grasses Strategy.
2001	National Strategy	Weedy Sporobolus Grasses Strategy endorsed by the Australian Weeds Committee.
2001	National Strategy	"Weedy Sporobolus Grasses Management Group" Charter of Operations. The Group is chaired by a community representative from the Capricorn Giant Rat's Tail Grass Action Group.

Year	Issue	Comments
2001	National Strategy	Weedy Sporobolus Grasses Strategy 2001-2006 launched by the Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson at the AgForce 2001 Annual Conference "Forging Strong Links" held at Mackay on 30 July 2001.
2001	R&D - Biological Control research	Meat & Livestock Australia funding for a Queensland Department of Natural Resources project "African survey for biological control agents for weedy Sporobolus" \$100 000 over two years.
2001	Education and awareness	PP48 March 2001 revision
2001	Community concerns	Question On Notice No. 165 15 May 2001 Mr Pearce (Member for Mirani) asked the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines(Mr Robertson)- With reference to the real concern in rural Queensland that Weedy Sporobolus Grasses (giant rats tail grass and giant Parramatta Grass) are destroying both environmental and pastoral lands and as it is acknowledged by rural industries that Weedy Sporobolus grasses are like no other weed in their destructive capabilities and the impact is being felt environmentally, economically and socially and there is a need to act immediately before the problem is completely irreversible— (1) What research and extension work is proposed by the Department of Natural Resources for Central and Northern Queensland in the short term (12 months) and long term (five years) that will contain and control these grasses? (2) What funds have been allocated to assist departmental officers and landowners in the ongoing control and eradication programs? Answer: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2001/010731QN.PDF">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2001/010731QN.PDF</a>
2001	Education and awareness	Two page articles on weeds "Can we win the war against weed menace?" Queensland Country Life June 21 2001 page 4-5.
2001	Local government concerns	25 Oct 2001 Wide Bay – South Burnett Local Government Association meeting resolved "that the Department of Natural Resources reconsider its position on funding priorities and seek additional funding for research into seed identification and classification for giant rat's tail grass".
2001	Local government concerns	Local Government of Queensland (LGAQ) 105 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2001 held at Townsville adopted Resolution 89 Giant Rats Tail Grass – Declared A Pest Of National Significance Moved: (Mareeba) Seconded: (Mareeba). "That the Local Government Association of Queensland take the appropriate steps to have Giant Rats Tail grass declared a weed of national significance; and seek support for subsidy from the State Government to help Local Governments contain the spread of Giant Rats Tail grass" and further the State Government be requested to increase the amount of money allocated to weed control throughout the State."
2001	Community-based action	A landowner develops own proposal for landholder assistance and writes to 75 local authorities and LGAQ seeking support.
2001	Local government concerns	Nov 2001 Cooloola Shire Council resolved that the "Council join with other affected Councils through LGAQ to lodge submissions to the State and Federal Government to fund a scheme to eradicate giant rats tail grass by way of supply and delivery of chemicals and monitoring process, with Councils to be facilitators
2001	Local government concerns	26 Nov 2001 LGAQ proposes that the Queensland Government fund a GIANT RAT'S TAIL GRASS eradication scheme which would involve the supply and delivery of chemicals on a local basis.
2002	Local government concerns	Local Government of Queensland (LGAQ) 106 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2002 held at Maryborough adopted Resolution 95 Giant Rats Tail Grass – Declaration As A Pest Of National Significance. Moved: (Nebo) Seconded: (Belyando) "That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representation to the Federal and State Governments to have "Giant Rat's Tail Grass" classified universally across Queensland as a P1 and a weed of national significance and provide funding for its eradication."
2002	Local government concerns	LGAQ requesting listing of giant rat's tail grass as a Weed of National Significance.

Year	Issue	Comments
2002	Local government concerns	Nebo Shire Council requests listing of giant rat's tail grass as a Weed of National Significance.
2002	Community based-action	Landowner gives presentation on giant rat's tail grass landholder program.
2003	State legislation	<i>Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002</i> commenced 1 July 2003. Fireweed declared as a Class 2 declared pest plant. A landowner must take reasonable steps to keep land free of Class 2 pests. A guideline for the management of giant rat's tail grasses was prepared under section 15 of the Act. The operational objectives for giant rat's tail grass management were <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To prevent the spread of giant rat's tail grasses into uninvested areas.</li> <li>To manage the economic and environmental impacts of established infestations.</li> </ul> Each local government must have a pest management plan for the declared pests in its area.
2003	Community based action	\$40 000 to the Capricorn Pest Management Group to develop advertisements for both radio and television focusing on weed seed spread of giant rat's tail grass and African love grass. \$220 000 to establish three washdown facilities to be used in part for giant rat's tail grass
2003	Local government concerns	Cooloola Shire Council requests listing of giant rat's tail grass as a Weed of National Significance.
2003	Education and awareness	NRM Facts - Pest series Giant rats tail grass <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> and <i>Sporobolus natalensis</i> PP48 May 2003 revision
2003	Local government concerns	Local Government of Queensland (LGAQ) 107 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2003 adopted Resolution 103 Weed Management - Giant Rats Tail Grass – Declared As Weed Of National Significance. Mover: (Nebo) Seconder: (Maroochy) "That the Local Government Association of Queensland be requested to lobby relevant Federal and State Government Departments to change the classification of <i>Sporobolus</i> grasses. <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> & <i>Sporobolus natalensis</i> (giant rat's tail grass) be declared and that funding be provided for a detailed study into the extent, implications and solutions to the threat and spread of giant rat's tail grass."
2004	Community concerns	Question On Notice No. 81 Tuesday, 20 April 2004. Mr Malone (Member for Mirani) asked the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (Mr Robertson) "(1) Will he detail the progress of control measures for the control of woody weeds and grasses, ie sicklepod, lantana, rat's tail grass and others? (2) Has he briefed the environmental movement of the utter devastation to the landscape caused by the spread of these pests and asked for their support to highlight the problem?" ANSWER: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2004/81-2004.pdf">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2004/81-2004.pdf</a>
2004	Local government concerns	Local Government of Queensland (LGAQ) 108 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2004 adopted Resolution 71 Weed Management - Giant Rats Tail Grass – Increased Surveillance And Funding. Mover: (Nebo) Seconder: (Cooloola) "That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the appropriate Queensland Government Departments to, as a matter of priority: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make a comprehensive survey of the prevalence of giant rat's tail grass throughout the State;</li> <li>Assess the future threat the pest represents;</li> <li>Allocate a realistic funding subsidy towards the cost of its containment or if possible, its eradication."</li> </ol>
2005	Local government concerns	Mareeba Shire Council requests the listing of giant rat's tail grass as a Weed of National Significance.
2004	Identity	Molecular marker identification tool developed to distinguish single seeds of weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> seeds from native grasses.

Year	Issue	Comments
2005	Education and awareness	Facts - Pest series Giant rats tail grass and other weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> species <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> , <i>S. natalensis</i> , <i>S. jacquemontii</i> , <i>S. fertilis</i> and <i>S. africanus</i> PP48 October 2005 revision
2006	Education and awareness	Facts - Pest series Giant rats tail grass and other weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> species <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> , <i>S. natalensis</i> , <i>S. jacquemontii</i> , <i>S. fertilis</i> and <i>S. africanus</i> PP48 Feb 2006 revision
2007	Major Publication	Weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> Grass Best Practice Manual 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition The manual was launched by the Queensland Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Hon Tim Mulherin at AgForce meeting at Nebo.
2007	Education and awareness	Fact sheet Invasive Plants and animals Giant rats tail grass and other weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> species <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> , <i>S. natalensis</i> , <i>S. jacquemontii</i> , <i>S. fertilis</i> and <i>S. africanus</i> PP48 September 2007 revision
2008	Community concerns	Question on Notice No. 24 Tuesday, 12 February 2008, Mrs Cunningham (Member for Gladstone) asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Mr Lucas) "With reference to landowners who adjoin the Aldoga Industrial Estate who are greatly affected by noxious weed infestations (giant rat's tail and rubber vine in particular) and to the affected government lots which include Lot 8 on SP200847, Lot 1 on SP147877, Lot 267 on SP200847 and Lot 3 on SP 101558—(1) What specific actions have been taken to control noxious weeds as above? (2) Will he outline the ongoing noxious weeds management program for the entire state development area?" Answer: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2008/24-2008.pdf">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2008/24-2008.pdf</a>
2008	Community concerns	Question On Notice No. 1294 11 September 2008, Mr Wendt (Member for Ipswich West) asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (Mr Mulherin) "Will he advise what progress Biosecurity Queensland has made in the area of weed biological control during 2008?" Answer: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2008/1294-2008.pdf">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2008/1294-2008.pdf</a> "The largely externally funded biological control program for the weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> grasses (such as giant rat's tail grass) was terminated following host testing of the leaf smut that indicated that the fungus could attack four Australian native <i>Sporobolus</i> grasses and would therefore not be approved for release."
2008	Major Publication	Final Report to Meat and Livestock Australia NBP.308 <i>Strategic Management of Weedy Sporobolus grasses</i>
2009	Local government concerns	Tablelands Regional Council requests listing of giant rat's tail grass as a Weed of National Significance (WONS).
2009	Local government concerns	Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) 113 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2009 held in Brisbane between 24-27 August 2009 adopted Resolution 46 Weed Management – Giant Rats Tail Grass. Mover: (Gympie) Seconder: (Gympie) "That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representations to Federal and State Governments that giant rat's tail grass be added to the Weeds of National Significance (WONS) as a priority"
2010	Community concerns	Question On Notice No. 1035 asked on 8 June 2010 Mr Messenger (Member for Bundaberg) asked the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland (Mr Mulherin) "With reference to the fact that giant rat's tail grass is a noxious weed which is now out of control in Queensland and infesting large areas of government and privately owned land— (1) Will the Minister give a guarantee that the seed for this weed was not imported or released by any Queensland Government? (2) Will the Minister detail for the last five years (reported separately) the amount of State Government funds spent on the chemical control of giant rat's tail grass for State Government owned land?" Answer: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2010/1035-2010.pdf">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2010/1035-2010.pdf</a>
2010	National Policy	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Qld) and the Department of Primary Industries (NSW) jointly nominated giant rat's tail grass as a candidate Weed of National Significance (WONS) in 2010 and provided the assessment data package. The Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) undertook the assessment of the nominated weeds on behalf of the Federal Government and the Australia Weeds Committee (AWC).
2011	Education and awareness	Fact sheet Declared Class 2 Pest Plant Giant rats tail grass and other weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> species <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> , <i>S. natalensis</i> , <i>S. jacquemontii</i> , <i>S. fertilis</i> and <i>S. africanus</i> PP48 January 2011 revision.
2012	National Policy	Twelve additional Weeds of National Significance are announced. Giant rat's tail grass is not included as a weed of national significance.

Year	Issue	Comments
2012	Education and awareness	Fact sheet Declared Class 2 Pest Plant Giant rats tail grass and other weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> species <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> , <i>S. natalensis</i> , <i>S. jacquemontii</i> , <i>S. fertilis</i> and <i>S. africanus</i> PP48 April 2012 revision.
2013	Local government concerns	Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) 117 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2013 adopted Resolution 68 Weed Management – Declaration Of Giant Rats Tail Grass As A Weed Of National Significance. Mover: (Tablelands) Seconder: (Tablelands) “That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State and Federal Governments to declare and provide relevant funding for giant rat’s tail grass to be a Weed of National Significance.”
2015	Community concerns	Question On Notice No. 427 on 3 June 2015, Mr Knuth asked the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing (Hon B Byrne) “Will the Minister advise what action is being taken to eradicate problematic Navua sedge and giant rat’s tail grasses?” Answer: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2015/427-2015.pdf">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2015/427-2015.pdf</a>
2015	R&D - Biological Control research	The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries jointly submits a proposal to the Federal Government’s Rural Research and Development for Profit programme. This proposal includes a component directed at reinvestigating a previously discounted agent for giant rat’s tail grass as well as new agents not previously investigated.
2015	Education and awareness	Fact sheet Declared Class 2 Pest Plant Giant rats tail grass and other weedy <i>Sporobolus</i> species <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> , <i>S. natalensis</i> , <i>S. jacquemontii</i> , <i>S. fertilis</i> and <i>S. africanus</i> PP48 June 2015 revision
2016	Community concerns	Question On Notice No. 508 17 March 2016, Mr Perrett (Member for Gympie) asked the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries (Hon L Donaldson) “With reference to the Class 2 declared pest Giant Rat’s Tail Grass that continues to spread and be an ongoing problem within the Gympie Electorate— Will the Minister advise (a) what investment is the Government making into research and development to find a biological control of this invasive pest, (b) if there is no investment into this measure will the Government commit to commissioning and funding research and development into a biological control, and (c) what measures, including funding is the Government providing to local governments throughout Queensland to assist them in educating and informing private landowners on how to deal with this insidious weed?” Answer: <a href="http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2016/508-2016.pdf">http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2016/508-2016.pdf</a>
2016	Queensland legislation	<i>Biosecurity Act</i> 2014 commenced 1 July 2016. Giant rat’s tail grass listed as Category 3 restricted matter, giant rat’s tail grass must not be distributed or released into the environment. A person dealing with giant rat’s tail grass, a carrier of giant rat’s tail grass or undertaking an activity must take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimise the biosecurity risk posed by giant rat’s tail grass. A local government’s function is to ensure the management of giant rat’s tail grass in its area in compliance with the Act. Each local government must have a Biosecurity Plan for its area.
2016	Education and awareness	Factsheet revision for the commencement of <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> . Rat’s tail grasses <i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> , <i>S. natalensis</i> , <i>S. jacquemontii</i> and <i>S. fertilis</i>
2016	R&D - Herbicide control research	Further trials established to assess the effectiveness of control options for giant rat’s tail grass through better use of flupropanate and other herbicides, fertiliser and fire, and a better understanding of the effect of pasture management.
2016-17	AEC inquiry	

## Selected clippings from Queensland newspapers

# Rural Lands detail giant rat's tail grass treatment

FOLLOWING concern expressed by Coast shires and dairymen over the spread of Giant Rat's Tail Grass through valuable farming land the Rural Lands Protection Board has detailed the best way of treatment.

The Alan Fletcher Research Station has carried out trials involving over 30 different herbicides for the control of the grass from Miriam Vale to the NSW border.

It can be readily killed, but the problem is that there are no selective herbicides to control a grass within a green pasture.

There are three herbicides which

provide best results - Frenock, 2,2DPA and Roundup.

Roundup is effective as a spot spray at 1 part in 100 parts of water, applied in Summer and Autumn when the plants are actively growing, and preferably before seed sets. Roundup as a rope wick application at a concentration of 1 part in 1 part of water is also effective.

Giant Rat's Tail Grass is best controlled by using an integrated program based on the following principles:

Prevent infestation through contaminated vehicles and pasture seeds.

Remove early light infestation.

Manage pastures for good vigour and dense ground cover using crop/pasture rotations.

Chemical control.

Because of the difficulty of control of this species and the need for an integrated approach to control over a lengthy period (3-4 years) it would be impractical to enforce control such as enter and clear action by councils if it was declared.

The Rural Lands Protection Board discussed the declaration of Giant Rat's Tail Grass at its meetings in September 1989 and 1991 and decided against it for the above reasons.

Figure 1 Rural Lands Protection Board information published in the Coolum & Hinterland Herald 1 Aug 1991 page 2.

# Weed pest forces graziers to reduce cattle numbers

THE threat to the cattle industry posed by Giant Rat's Tail Grass was a prime concern at the Bundaberg District Local Government Association meeting.

The association decided to call on the State Government to provide additional funding for research into the control and destruction of the weed pest.

Miriam Vale Shire deputy chairman Cr John Siller said Rat's Tail Grass was causing the council serious concern because of its ability to spread quickly and the lack of a successful destruction method.

Cr Siller said whole paddocks in the shire had been over-run by the weed, which was unpalatable for cattle.

In some areas it had reached the stage where cattle owners were be-

ing forced to reduce the number of cattle they could run on their land, he said.

He said that for the first time, budget money had been allocated to pay for the chemical spraying of Rat's Tail Grass on roadside verges, indicating the severity of the situation.

But he doubted this attempt to control the grass would succeed because of its resilience and ability to spread.

He said another problem was that Rat's Tail Grass was difficult to identify.

And Cr Siller warned the problem would only get worse, especially if the district had a big flood season.

Isis Shire Chairman Cr Wally Christensen and Gooburrum Shire

Chairman Cr Bill Neubecker echoed Cr Siller's concerns.

Cr Neubecker said properties in his shire were badly infested.

"It's impossible to slash, it spreads like wildlife and good grazing land becomes useless," he said.

"In New South Wales property values dropped dramatically because of it."

A letter from Miriam Vale Shire Council stated that the Rural Lands Protection Board had refused to declare the weed a noxious plant.

"Given the great importance of primary production to the nation's economy, it is not unrealistic to expect public money to fund more research," the letter stated.

Cr Neubecker said his council had asked for it to be declared by the board, but the request had been knocked back.

Figure 2 Concerns expressed by the members of the Bundaberg District Local Government Association. News-Mail (Bundaberg, Qld) 16 December 1991 page 2.

# Team attacks weed menace

THE Gooburrum Shire Chairman has hailed as a breakthrough a State Government decision to establish a project team to fight Giant Rats Tail Grass.

Bundaberg will be well-represented in the team, with locally-based Land Management Department senior inspector Mr Bernie Shore named project manager.

Land Management Minister Mr Bill Eaton told Gooburrum Shire Council in a letter that the project team would be set up to devise a State plan for the control of the grass.

The letter was a response to a deputation by Shire Chairman Cr Bill Neubecker, Miriam Vale Shire Council deputy chairman Cr John Siller and Cattlemen's Union Burnett region representative Mr Trevor Dawson to Mr Eaton when the State Cabinet met in Bundaberg.

Cr Neubecker said he was pleased with the response — "there's a bit of weight in it".

"I believe it's an important step because it's such a complex situation," he said.

"Nobody knows how to attack it. Setting up a project team could be just the answer."

He said a State plan for control of the weed pest would help the council spend money wisely on fighting the problem locally.

Giant Rats Tail grass — which has the potential to render agricultural land useless — has spread drastically through Gooburrum and surrounding shires, prompting great concern among councils.

In the letter, Mr Eaton reaffirmed that the department had declared Giant Rats Tail grass in category P4 throughout the State from early July.

"This places the emphasis for control on roadsides, water courses and light infestations, along with containment of heavy infestations," he said.

The Minister said it was intended that management plans for declared plant control be developed jointly by local authorities and land protection branch officers for each local authority area.

He said an interdepartmental working group already was examining how to best control and manage Giant Rats Tail Grass on an individual property basis.

"The Department of Primary Industries itself is carrying out a considerable amount of work in this regard and many farm demonstration days have been held," he said.

"My department is also carrying out research on the control of this pest."

Mr Eaton said the director of his land protection branch was still investigating the deputation's query about the possibility of Frenock (a weedicide) being made available through the branch's herbicide supply system for Giant Rats Tail grass control.



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Figure 3 Response following a deputation to the Minister for Land Management in July 1992. News-Mail (Bundaberg, Qld) 22 August 1992.

# Giant rat's tail falls to Roundup

## Gympie, Miriam Vale, Bundaberg face infestation

QUEENSLAND cattlemen on coastal country, like their counterparts in Northern NSW battling Parramatta grass infestations in pastures, are waging war against a related species, giant rat's tail, which is equally as unpalatable to stock.

Giant rat's tail is a weed problem particular to landholders around Gympie, Bundaberg and Miriam Vale but it extends generally from southern to northern Queensland within 100km of the coast.

The herbicide Roundup is expected to be registered as a broad application herbicide for Parramatta grass in NSW in the first half of 1993. Also, Roundup is being used in trial work on giant's rat tail grass in Queensland to enable registration data to be submitted.

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries recommends a spot spray rate of 20ml/L of water for Roundup as a treatment against giant rat's tail.

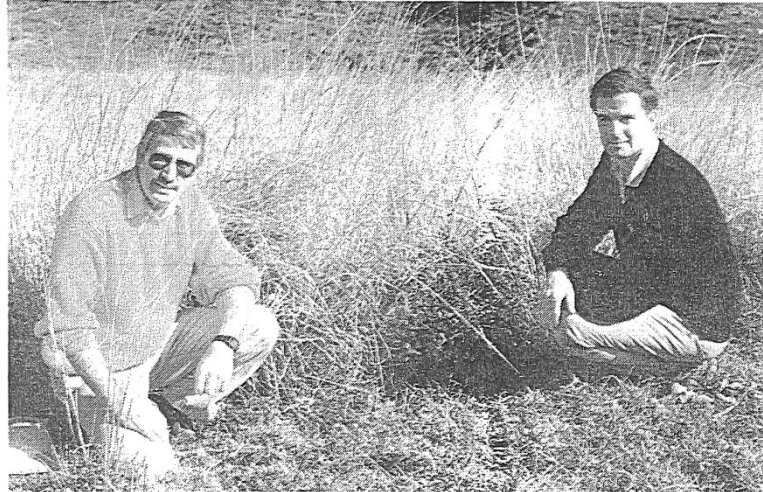
Spring Valley Brahman Stud at Gympie cooperated with the DPI in May 1992 to stage a pasture field day giving prominence to the giant rat's tail problem. Results from a trial on broad-application techniques using Roundup were a feature of the field day.

Giant rat's tail (*Sporobolus pyramidalis*) is a tufted perennial grass that can grow about 2m high, even taller than its Parramatta grass cousin. It crowds out desirable pasture plants eaten by cattle through its unpalatability.

Single tussocks of giant rat's tail can produce up to 200 seed heads a year, with about two million seeds per kg, which leads to rapid spread of the weed.

Rob Scott, Monsanto sales specialist for south east Queensland, said the productive capacity of a pasture diminished considerably when dominated by giant rat's tail.

"By controlling small infestations of giant rat's tail now, property owners might avoid a



Ross Hurwood, farm manager for Spring Valley, Gympie (left) and Arthur Sallsbury, agricultural chemicals manager, Sauers, Gympie, inspect renovated pasture alongside untreated giant rat's tail grass on Spring Valley.

major problem in the future," Mr Scott said.

"The key to effective weed control is proper plant identification. The DPI offers an identification service through its botany branch in Brisbane."

Mr Scott said producers could contact their local DPI office or Roundup distributors throughout coastal Queensland, including Sauers at Nambour, Cooroy, Pomona, Gympie, Maryborough, Childers, Rockhampton and Tully, to arrange access to this service.

Farm manager at Spring Valley for the past eight years, Ross Hurwood, said giant rat's tail had been treated as a particular problem since 1988 although farm records showed it had been present on the 400ha property for about 15 years.

"During the dry years of the 1980s, giant rat's tail existed in the property's pastures as individual clumps, but it was not prevalent," Mr Hurwood said.

"But after the heavy summer rain of 1989, giant rat's tail literally exploded to dominate some of our improved pastures. Its spread was made worse by the record 21.4m flood rain in February this year."

Spring Valley implemented a management strategy against rat's tail in 1990, involving fertiliser application to encourage desirable pasture species such as kikuyu to "suffocate" rat's tail, careful cattle management, and strategic herbicide application including spot spraying with Roundup.

Stock, for instance, can be kept in a small,

clean holding paddocks for a few days after removal from infested areas to reduce the risk of contaminating larger, clean areas.

One grazer even put his cattle through a plunge dip to wash off any rat's tail seed.

"The result has been a significant decline in rat's tail in 1990 from 80pc of the pasture in some paddocks to the situation today with only scattered clumps of the troublesome weed," Mr Hurwood said.

## Ausolar energy simple, cheap

THE innovative Ausolar system has helped to break the cost barrier on solar energy.

Heinz Hemple, who operates Ausolar Solar and Renewable Energy Systems at Deception Bay, has long insisted that solar energy systems need not be expensive with modern technology.

He says the right selection of the appropriate components and the willingness to start with a small system and enlarge it step by step has attracted many new customers to solar techniques.

"People are noticing that prices for solar cells are coming down and they are also more aware of the environment problems caused by other forms of energy generation," Mr Hemple said.

**Correction:** In last week's Queensland Country Life (page 35) an article on the Trap Rock Woolgrowers Association referred to the Association's chairman as Beau Duncan, Spring Creek, Cement Mills.

This should have read Beau Ferrier, Spring Creek, Cement Mills. Country Life apologise for any inconvenience caused by this error.

**Correction:** On Page 22 of the Queensland Country Life Farm Hints booklet in last week's issue the phone number of Tornado Industries was incorrectly printed as 8076 1900. The correct number is (07) 807 1900. We apologise for any inconvenience caused to Tornado Industries and readers.

Figure 4 Follow up story to the Spring Valley field day published in Queensland Country Life 24 Dec 1992.

# State weighs into GRT war

By  
**MARILYN FLYNN**  
R'hampton 07 4927 9422  
Gladstone 07 4979 4560



## CALL FOR ACTION:

### Weed pest a costly foe

**G**IANT Rats Tail (GRT) grass has cost the Wedel family dearly.

Apart from reducing the carrying capacity of its 3620ha Kalarka district property, Rangeview, attempting to contain the weed has proved an expensive and ongoing exercise.

Apart from an average annual chemical bill of \$500, last year the Wedels spent \$10,000 buying an all-terrain vehicle and spray equipment specifically to tackle the problem.

Ken Wedel, who heads up the family operation, which runs a commercial beef herd and grows bananas, has been dealing with the weed for about 25 years.

In that time GRT has taken its toll on Rangeview's pastures, which mainly comprise pangola, Callide rhodes and setaria, and Mr Wedel knows of other producers who have seen the carrying capacity of infested paddocks reduced by between 50 and 80pc.

Chemical control at Rangeview has included rubbervine spray Frenock, which has since been taken off the market, and Roundup, which Mr Wedel said proved to be

the most effective, but only in the growing season.

"What I'd like to know is whether bio-control will have any impact. This weed came from Africa - if it has been doing as well there as it here the whole country would be covered in it.

He also suggested the introduction of a subsidy on chemicals and spray equipment for property owners.

"When (Natural Resources Minister) Rod Welford commented on GRT a couple of weeks ago he gave the impression it was under control and easy to identify. But he was wrong on all counts."

In contrast, Mr Wedel said the weed was

often hidden among pastures until they were grazed down and was similar in appearance to native Parramatta grass.

Mr Wedel commended the work of the Marlborough District Landcare Group and project officer Margaret Emmerly for organising field days to help educate landholders.

The group has also made a submission to Meat and Livestock Australia for funding to carry out control method trials. - *Story and picture: MARILYN FLYNN.*

© Tim Wedel, Rangeview, Kalarka, inspects a paddock heavily infested with GRT. K8859



### THREE QUICK QUESTIONS

■ What role should the Government play in GRT control?

GF: "...it's up to individual landholders learning to recognise GRT, and deal with it on their property. It will be about us assisting landholders in helping themselves."

■ What's the first step in combating the problem?

GF: "It all comes back to knowing what's on your own property and if something's different, question it."

■ Isn't identifying GRT half the battle?

CW: "Intensive research has been carried out by DPI with the aim of finding the means to easily identify GRT and how it spreads."

**T**HE campaign to stem the alarming spread of Giant Rats Tail (GRT) grass across valuable coastal grazing country is heating up.

While this aggressive weed has typically taken a back seat to Weeds of National Significance (WONS) such as parthenium and rubbervine, recent field days in Central Queensland have thrown the spotlight back on GRT, highlighting its dramatic impact on carrying capacities, producer incomes and land values.

GRT is not new. Rather, it has been a menace since the late 1960s when it was first introduced into Queensland as a weed contaminant in imported pasture grass seed.

And while it was previously confined to the wetter coastal and sub-coastal areas of the State, research suggests it is now on the move to drier parts such as the Central Coast and Highlands.

An increased number of producers are reporting the species and, only a matter of months ago, landholders in the Bauhinia Shire were put on alert following the discovery of local infestations.

At the same time, the market withdrawal of Frenock (flupropanate), a selective herbicide which is a by-product from ICI Crop Care's production of the now-obsolete CFC gas-refrigerant, has posed a major setback.

But while there are no miracle cures, it now appears landholders are about to be handed more ammunition to deal with a growing problem.

The State Government is proposing the development of a GRT weed strategy - separate to the Queensland Weed Strategy currently being compiled by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In addition, a practical control manual will be released next month, outlining the most effective containment methods from using pressurised wick-wipers for dense infestations to pre-cropping and pasture replacement options on arable land.

The government has also pledged to provide \$100,000 to facilitate field days across Queensland during the next 12 months.

And while some producers argue they have been all but forgotten in their battle with GRT, the manager of the Department of Natural Resources's land protection services division, Glen Fisher, said both the DNR and Department of Primary Industries had been seeking solutions for several years.

Senior policy ecologist with land protection,

Craig Walton, said intensive ecological research had been carried out by the DPI with the aim of finding the means to easily identify GRT and how it spreads, so protocols can be put in place to slow its progress.

One proposal currently being considered is voluntary vendor declarations for weed seed.

"But in the end it's up to individual landholders learning to recognise GRT and deal with it on their property. It will be about us assisting landholders in helping themselves," Mr Fisher said.

"It all comes back to knowing what's on your own property and if something's different, question it."

"Landholders should see their fence line as quarantine barrier."

A better grassroots understanding of the issue is clearly the objective of local groups, such as the Marlborough Landcare Group, which held recent back-to-back field days at

Kalarka and Mount Larcom in Central Queensland.

Both demonstrated the frightening capacity of the weed. At the Wedel family's Kalarka district property, Rangeview, the carrying capacity of infested paddocks has been dramatically reduced and continues to diminish, while the expense of containment is ongoing.

This is not surprising given the weed's alarming credentials. An import from South Africa, it is unpalatable to cattle but boasts a vigorous seedbank, which is easily transported by stock, native animals, water and machinery.

Given that GRT seed can remain dormant and viable in the soil for 10 years and the plant can survive across a wide range of soil types and rainfall areas, it has been estimated that 30 million hectares are at risk Australia-wide.

Shadow Minister for Natural Resources Vince Lester was among the 70-strong crowd which turned out at the Kalarka field day, later

reporting to State Parliament that the weed had the capacity to be the worst noxious weed Australia had yet seen.

However, that does not appear to be the opinion of the group which compiled the Weeds of National Significance list, on which GRT does not appear.

Therefore, national funding is not available to aid in its control. It is up to the State government to work in cooperation with local authorities and landholders.

Meanwhile, producers can take some heart that Natural Resources Minister Rod Welford has acknowledged if existing infestations are not brought under control, GRT will continue to render valuable cattle country virtually useless and potentially affect the hip pocket of a large percentage of graziers.

Mr Welford will have the opportunity to view the problem for himself when he visits the Mackay area today.

Figure 5. Queensland Country Life 23 September 1999

# Pressure on to develop Giant Rat's Tail strategy

Representatives from primary producer organisations, Local Government and State Government agencies met at Rockhampton on February 29th and March 1st to develop a much needed Queensland strategy for the containment and control of Giant Rat's Tail grass. Department of Primary Industries have led the preliminary research effort to investigate the ecology and management of Giant Rat's Tail (GRT), an invasive, aggressive and persistent perennial grass species which is unpalatable to stock when mature.

DPI Queensland Beef Industry Institute beef cattle extension officer and GRT project team member, Bill Schulke, Bundaberg, pointed out that in the early 1990's an estimated 90,000 hectares of Queensland's coastal dairy and beef cattle grazing lands were infested with GRT. "Today, that estimate has reached 200,000 ha and if left unchecked, GRT has the potential to impact on the grazing viability

and productivity of 103 million ha across the State," said Mr Schulke.

"On a national front, if the spread of GRT is allowed to continue, 223M ha or 29 per cent of Australia's pastoral country could be invaded with disastrous economic ramifications," said Mr Schulke.

A three year GRT Project partly funded by Meat and Livestock Australia and the Dairy Research and Development Corporation to investigate the ecology and "best practice" management of this weed had now been finalised.

A major outcome of the collaborative GRT project effort involving DPI, Department of Natural Resources, University of Queensland, NSW Agriculture, local government and the GRT Landcare Advisory Group resulted in the publication of a 38 page GRT Best Practice Manual.

Figure 6. Central Telegraph Wednesday 1 March 2000

## Dry suits rats tail grass growth

THE dry conditions in the north could introduce a new threat to the cattle industry with increasing reports of giant rats tail grass in Dalrymple Shire.

According to Natural Resources Land Protection officer, Dennis Kerr, the occurrences have been found where landholders have fed hay to livestock.

"Landholders should closely watch areas where hay has been unloaded, stored or distributed for any signs of seedlings," Mr Kerr said.

He urged producers to kill seedlings immediately if detected and any seeds removed or burnt.

Giant rats tail grass was first introduced into Queensland as a pasture seed in the 1960s and has adapted well to large areas of the State. The grass is highly aggressive and has the potential to invade 30

million hectares of Queensland grazing country.

Mature leaf blades of the grass are tough, which cattle find difficult to graze.

Commercial properties have found the grass can reduce carrying capacities and decrease stock weight gains. Stock can take an extra 12 months to finish on country infested on giant rats tail grass.

"It is a coarse tufted grass that will grow up to 1.7 metres high with seed heads that change from a dense 'rat tail' spike, to open up to a pyramid shape at flowering," Mr Kerr said.

According to Dalrymple Shire Council administration manager, Raymon Jayo, southern areas of the State have found that if infestation is not controlled in the early stages, the weed will quickly cover large tracts of productive land.

"Small patches of giant rats tail grass are easy to kill using herbicides," Mr Jayo said. The recommended herbicides for giant rats tail grass eradication are glyphosate or flupropanate.

Mr Kerr stressed that, ideally, landholders should try to feed and unload livestock and wash vehicles in the same place each year, so those places can be checked regularly especially after rain and during the summer.

"When buying livestock of fodder, people should ask for a Voluntary Vendor Declaration and insist vehicle and machinery are washed down before entering their property," Mr Kerr said.

Mr Jayo added that any person wanting to know more about the grass and its habits should contact their local council.

Figure 7 North Queensland register April 18 2002 page 3

# Load of fodder contains giants rats tail grass

THE experience of a Brisbane Valley landholder should serve as a warning to anyone buying fodder with the remaining 43 bales of a 44-bale load set for destruction after the identification of giant rats tail grass.

The fodder was purchased by a Linville landholder and came from Brisbane City Council land at the Brisbane Airport.

The discovery of the weed was

included in a report to Wednesday's meeting of Esk Shire council. The matter has been referred to the Department of Natural Resources with the council supporting the destruction of the fodder and also supporting further investigations into any other contaminated shipments into the shire.

The Department of Primary Industries advises that giant rats tail grass is serious weed of pastures weed which is difficult to control.

Figure 8 Gatton Lockyer Brisbane Valley Star Wednesday, page 21

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