

Date: 12.12.16

ATTN: Research Director, Agriculture and Environment Committee. Parliament House QLD

From: Tim Scott, Farmer, Leasee and Owner of Rural Supply Business – Bos Rural Supplies

Regarding: Submission on Invasive Weeds

Introduction: My experience with invasive weeds in the Gympie, Noosa and Sunshine Coast area is limited to Giant Rats Tail (GRT) grass and my comments come as a person new to an area with GRT and the owner of a rural supply store with exposure to customers facing invasive weed issues across Northern Australia. I have a Science Degree through UQ and have worked in livestock industries in Australia and internationally and currently also run two farms in the Mary Valley.

I have three comments around invasive weeds:

1. **Biosecurity Act:** Local Council (in our case Gympie Regional Council) seem to have little understanding of the recent changes to the Biosecurity Act of 2014 when it comes to accessing easements on private land. In our case we have an easement across our (leased) land to a council water tower which requires regular access. In order to reduce the risk of weed infestation (identified in our risk analysis after several weed incursions along an old council access route), on July 1, I implemented several measures to limit access and share the risk of future outbreaks. Our request for the Gympie Council to share biosecurity risk of weed spread was largely ignored which has resulted in a five-month “standoff” where accessing parties haven’t been given approval from the council hierarchy to make long term arrangements for access and risk sharing. It seems there aren’t policies in place at this local council to deal with the changes to the Biosecurity Act.

As a secondary comment here, our region was largely government owned due to the Traveston Dam project. Over the 5 or so years the land was managed by the Qld. State Government, extensive infestations of GRT arose probably out of poor biosecurity and land managers (Real Estate Agents managing leases) having little idea of weed infestation issues. As soon as land was sold back into private ownership, where GRT was present, weeds notices were issued to the new owners. Many of these owners were frustrated that infestations had not been treated while in State Government ownership but a clean-up was immediately required by councils upon purchase. Many wonder if the same rules were being applied to everyone?

2. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

3. **Non-chemical control research:** Just as many believe Fireweed is an indicator species for poor sulphur levels in the soil, GRT is an indicator species low silica levels. Improving soil through better grazing techniques or some other means is the best way to properly lessen infestation levels (where possible). If “silver bullet” solutions are required (for example to appease Council weeds inspectors), there are non-fluproponate solutions. As a rural supply store we now refuse to sell Fluproponate products due to our personal concerns over its probable observed effect on the food chain. Glyphosate (used in conjunction with Fluproponate) by council weed control officers leaves a “brown-out” area (as does over-application of Fluproponate) creating an area of no competition for GRT and other weeds to proliferate without competition. There only has to be one seed survive for a new GRT infestation to start unimpeded. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Other questions that could be investigated with public funding include: Are there stages before the GRT seed becomes viable that it can be safely grazed to remove seeds more economically? Are there non-chemical feed/water additives that can be used with livestock to kill viable seed in the gut or in dung? How can land be decontaminated should it be found at a later stage that products being promoted by the industry and government is having a detrimental effect on the food-chain? What is the economic cost of this across the food industry?

Being a graduate of an Agricultural University, I understand who funds most trials and have a basic understanding of the APVMA registration process and the costs involved. As such I have become pretty cynical of the processes, but at some point shouldn't a "public interest" argument be placed on research funding for some of the questions posed above?

Conclusion: I welcome the opportunity to make a submission on Invasive Weeds, I believe the "track record" of the past couple of decades proves that we need to look beyond Chemicals to not control, but instead out-compete invasive species with beneficial species. Our advice to landholders through our rural store is now to focus on making conditions right for what species a property owner does want to grow and stop focussing on what they don't (the opposite to how most advisers approach the issue of invasive weeds). If chemical measures and current policies were effective, perhaps an enquiry like this would not be needed so I believe we need to look differently at the solution. I am not a hippy- I just think there is something a little wrong with producing food with poison- sorry.

Thank you for your attention.

Tim Scott

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