

Question on Notice

No. 1329

Asked on 9 November 2022

MR N DAMETTO ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the invasive weed *Cyperus aromaticus*, common name Navua Sedge continuing to spread throughout Queensland, rendering grazing land unusable and has now moved to choking sugar cane crops—

Will the Minister provide an update on behalf of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on the research that has been undertaken to find herbicide or biological solutions for the control of the weed and any assistance available to landowners and councils to combat its spread?

ANSWER:

The Invasive Plants and Animals Research Group in Biosecurity Queensland has recently published summaries of the Navua sedge research program in its annual Technical Highlights 2021-22 report (the report). On 28 November 2022, copies of the report were distributed to partner local governments and other stakeholders throughout Queensland. On 30 November 2022, the report was also published on the DAF website at www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/invasive-plants-animals/research/highlights.

The Biological Control project (page 18 of the report) aims to introduce insects or pathogens from Navua sedge's native range to control Navua sedge in Queensland. This process is regulated by the Australian government.

The Biological Control project team has identified a smut fungus that attacks Navua sedge flowers and seeds, and a rust fungus that attacks Navua sedge leaves and stems as potential control agents. Research on the biology and host specificity of these two agents is progressing at CABI (UK).

Research is also in progress in Queensland to identify native pathogens as prospective mycoherbicides. Student research projects are in progress to fill research gaps in the knowledge of the biology and ecology of Navua sedge. Future work will focus on surveys in native range countries to source more potential agents and to finish the host specificity testing of the priority agents.

The department already holds an Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority minor use permit (PER80065) that allows the use of Sempra Herbicide (halosulfuron-methyl) to control Navua sedge on roadsides, rights-of-way, footpaths, commercial and industrial areas.

While the impact assessments and this research continue to inform future management options, the management and control of Navua sedge continues to be a part of a landowner's general biosecurity obligation.