



Case studies

John and Sam Hickson, 'Eural', Boomi NSW



PROPERTY DETAILS

Location: 7 kms south of Boomi, north-west New South Wales

Catchment: Whalan Creek, Macintyre River catchment

Property area: 8,100 hectares

Main enterprises: Merino sheep for wool production, beef cattle production (breeding and store fattening), grain production

Where lippia is a problem: Floodplain grazing country



John Hickson in a healthy stand of Bambatsi

(Photo by P. Crawford)

General information and lippia infestation

'Eural' has a significant area of land on the Whalan Creek floodplain and this country has had an increasing lippia invasion for more than ten years. However, this has been managed through a conservative stocking rate and rotational grazing system, with the aim to leave a good level of groundcover at all times. John has observed that lippia is not a good competitor with a vigorous and well maintained pasture.

John and Sam bought the adjoining block 'Broxburn' in 2000, which is on the Whalan Creek floodplain. This block had been cleared many years ago, with approximately 480 hectares that hadn't been farmed for some years. This previously farmed area was virtually 100% lippia when purchased. With grazing being the main enterprise on 'Eural', it was necessary to plan for some serious lippia management on this block.

John has been involved in grazing management training through Resource Consulting Services, and this has assisted him to implement a more sustainable grazing system. John and Sam are in the process of implementing a time-controlled grazing system, with major changes to paddock sizes and increased stock watering points. At present, the original lippia paddock has been split up from one large 360 hectare paddock to smaller paddocks averaging around 60 hectares in size.

The Hicksons sold all their cattle early in 2007 in order to give their pastures a rest from the drought but have maintained approximately half their sheep flock. Following good rains in the spring of 2007, they are looking to partially re-enter the cattle market.





A close-up of the dense Bambatsi groundcover, which is contributing to lippia control

(Photo by P. Crawford)

Methods of lippia management

Cultivation, improved pasture establishment and grazing management are the methods of lippia control that are working very well on 'Eural'. With the grazing country on the new block virtually 100% lippia, the only viable option for control was cultivation.

Of the 480 hectares of lippia infested country on the new block, 320 hectares was ploughed with the aim of growing one or two crops and then planting back to pasture. A crop of wheat was planted in 2005 but a flood in July wiped out about half the crop. This country was planted down to pasture in October 2005 and good spring rainfall ensured an excellent germination.

The other half of the paddock was harvested and planted to pasture in February 2006. A very dry autumn and winter resulted in a very patchy germination but John hopes there will be an ongoing establishment with improved seasonal conditions from spring 2007.

The grass species planted have been Bambatsi panic and Floren bluegrass, with the Bambatsi by far the most dominant species.

Future control options

John and Sam will continue to subdivide more of their grazing paddocks into smaller sizes and, with the artesian bore capping and piping programme progressing in their area, they will have a much improved access to water which will enable the establishment of more watering points.

At this stage, no chemical has been used for lippia control but John may consider spraying lippia in laneways and tracks used by stock to reduce the potential for further spread.

John is very happy at this stage about the effectiveness of the introduced pasture in controlling lippia. Where there is good pasture establishment and good groundcover the lippia is not competing. He is confident of long-term control through pasture establishment and good grazing management.

