

MEDIA RELEASE

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Lippia studies in South America to help Queensland land managers

Studies into biological methods of Lippia control currently underway in South America will receive support from the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) and the CSIRO.

“Lippia has long been impacting on productivity and environmentally sensitive areas in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, particularly in the Border Rivers and Condamine catchments,” said QMDC’s Regional Coordinator for Weeds and Pests, Janet Barker.

Lippia, *Phyla canescens*, is an invasive weed that has taken over many riparian areas and floodplains throughout the Basin.

It is easily spread by floodwaters, birds and machinery and is highly aggressive, co-existing with and out-competing most native vegetation, said Ms Barker.

“Land managers have struggled to find management solutions that are sustainable and the concept of seeking out biological control agents as a long-term solution has been considered by researchers, landholders and policy makers,” she said.

CSIRO Entomology has pursued options for investigating pathogens and insects for Lippia control in South America, the native home of Lippia.

“Basically, we’re supporting a larger project into all forms of biological control, with QMDC supporting those aspects of the project focussed on pathogens which include rusts, fungi and diseases that inhibit the growth of the plant,” spokesperson for CSIRO Mr Mic Julien said.

Mr Julien said that it was important to study which natural pathogens control Lippia in its native environment to determine the most effective way of naturally controlling it here.

“The University of Bahia Blanca, south of Buenos Aires, has been contracted to collect pathogens found attacking Lippia, and determine whether these pathogens **only** attack Lippia,” he said.

It will be a time consuming, but important part of the research, to ensure that any pathogens considered for use in Australia will not harm any other plant or animal life.

This type of research can take quite a few years, so the study is still in its early stages, and is linked to current insect biological control agent surveys, supported by the NSW government.

QMDC’s Janet Barker pointed out that land managers should not wait for the outcomes of this project without pursuing other control methods.

“This project should not be seen as an immediate ‘silver bullet’ by land managers, however it may provide some tools in the longer term,” she said.

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Caption: *Phyla canescens*, the invasive weed commonly known as Lippia.



Photo courtesy of Mr. Sheldon Navie.