

MEDIA RELEASE

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QUEENSLAND
MURRAY-
DARLING
COMMITTEE



Keep an eye out for Paterson's curse

Landholders in the Stanthorpe region should keep an eye out for the weed Paterson's curse in coming months.

Favourable winter rainfall and mild conditions have already led to outbreaks of Paterson's curse (*Echium plantagineum*), which is common in southern parts of Australia, in the Stanthorpe area.

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee Weed Technical Officer Renee Stephenson said Paterson's curse had the capacity to completely take over pastures, particularly where sheep are involved.

"This is due to the grazing nature of sheep – they graze right down to the ground whereas cattle don't and this provides Paterson's curse with ideal conditions to dominate the pasture," she said.

The purple flowered plant can reduce pasture value as it out-competes pasture species and is toxic to grazing stock, particularly horses. It can be identified by its hairy, egg-shaped leaves and the 'curved trumpet' shape of its flower.

Stanthorpe Landcare Coordinator Harley West said he had seen Paterson's curse over the last two years on roadsides south and west of Stanthorpe.

"It grows well on roadsides and in areas where the ground has been disturbed by activities such as slashing," he said.

"We don't want this pest becoming established in the Stanthorpe area. We need to manage it early before that happens as with weeds, prevention is definitely better than cure.

"Paterson's curse is best treated when the flower is at the rosette stage, as this is when the plant is most susceptible to herbicides."

Mr West said now was a great time to talk about potential threats and the impact weeds could have on both natural habitats and agriculture with National Weedbusters Week scheduled for September 6-12.

Paterson's curse was deliberately introduced into Australia in the 1850s and is also known by the name of Salvation Jane. Its wide tolerance of different climate and soils means that it can grow almost anywhere in cooler areas of Australia.

Media contact/s

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Photograph: QMDC has a high resolution jpeg image of Paterson's curse available upon request.