

### SUGGESTIONS

This state of affairs could be overcome by amending the Act to permit some form of control over grazing management and other follow-up techniques, by providing that powers to administer the Act should not be vested exclusively with the council and by giving the recommendations of the Noxious Plants Officer greater weight, perhaps to the extent of vesting these powers solely with him. It could also be helpful to recognize officially the title 'Noxious Plants Officer'. This should improve the image of the position with landholders and others. The title of Weeds Inspector currently in use tends to create an attitude of fear and antagonism rather than cooperation in landholders.

In some situations, power for councils to undertake increased contract-type weed control for farmers could be helpful in ensuring that weeds are not allowed to develop beyond the ideal stage for treatment.

### CONCLUSION

Until the Act is amended as suggested and other measures mentioned are effected, spread of noxious plants on the Southern Tablelands will continue.

### ASSESSING THE EXTENT OF WEED INFESTATIONS

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It is difficult to ascertain the extent of infestation of any widely spread weed. This results in estimates of areas infested being either inaccurate, incomplete or not made at all. For example, in New South Wales there is no estimate of the area of land infested with St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and the estimate of 800 000 ha of land infested with serrated tussock grass (*Nasella trichotoma*) in 1964 could have had an error of  $\pm 30$  per cent.

Even if accurate, estimates of the total area infested are

not by themselves highly informative. Auxiliary information is needed, for example the occurrence of different classes of severity of infestation and the types of land infested.

Thus a survey of local government councils with weed control responsibilities was undertaken in New South Wales to provide more comprehensive information on the extent of serrated tussock and St. John's wort and to investigate the difficulties of obtaining accurate estimates of the areas infested.

Information was sought on: the occurrence of class 1 (large, dense infestations), class 2 (scattered patches with isolated plants interspersed) and class 3 (widely scattered individual plants) infestations; the occurrence of the weeds on roads, rail, river, rarely-used, rural arable and rural non-arable land; and the land type where the main problem infestations occurred.

The information collected did not allow the calculation of the actual areas infested. Some councils had accurate records of areas infested, but not divided into class 1, 2 and 3 infestations; other councils had no records of the areas infested.

However, the information did reveal the proportion of shires having class 1, 2 and 3 infestations, which enabled a map to be prepared and the total area affected by the different classes of infestation to be calculated on a shire basis. Attributing the whole area of a shire to a class 1, 2 or 3 infestation grossly exaggerates the area infested but it is the best guide we can obtain under the present level of knowledge. The collated data also showed the frequency of occurrence of the weeds and the frequency of occurrence of the main problem infestations on six types of land. These data are important for formulating control programs and research projects.

To ascertain the actual area of land infested by a weed, records must be kept of the area infested on each parcel of land under the control of each local government body. For these figures to be informative the areas infested should be divided into class 1, 2 and 3 infestation and each class of infestation sub-divided into the area infested on different land types (i.e. on road, rail, river, rarely used, rural arable and rural non-arable land).

Thus it is proposed that a standard method of estimating the area of different classes of weed infestation on the different land types be devised for use by all local government bodies involved in weed control in New South Wales.

It seems logical that there should be a standard method for estimating the extent of weed infestations throughout Australia and that this conference should suggest, discuss and even define a suitable method.