

The extension method using the 'success story' approach to encourage neighbours and friends to adopt similar control measures has been partially successful.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the extension method being used the most appropriate?
2. Is nodding thistle really noxious or just another pasture weed?
3. Does it pay to control nodding thistle?
4. Are other States aware of the potential explosive spread of this weed?
5. What is the actual cost to the grazing industry?

NODDING THISTLE ON THE NORTHERN TABLELANDS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Nodding thistle (*Carduus nutans*) is rapidly spreading and proving to be a real threat to the productivity of Northern Tableland pastures. At present the infestations are confined to definable areas. Few infestations can be regarded as dense.

EXTENSION - HOW EFFECTIVE?

The question is sometimes asked - "how effective is extension in encouraging worthwhile control of a certain weed?"

Fortunately, a potentially dangerous weed, if publicized in a particular way, will immediately claim the attention of land-holders.

Control of a 'threatening weed' is therefore a relatively easy concept to 'sell'. This potential can be capitalized on by designing an extension program to involve the whole district or region in a fight against the problem.

THE EXTENSION PROGRAM

An awareness campaign was conducted stressing the potential danger of this plant to fertile pasture areas. It was

emphasized that the thistle is not difficult to kill with phenoxy herbicides and that at present infestations are confined to limited areas.

THE CAMPAIGN

The awareness campaign included: direct mailing of a short, 'punchy' leaflet to all land-holders on the Northern Tablelands, and field days on infested properties and widespread publicity through mass media, including radio, newspapers and television.

Because most nodding thistle seed is not blown further than about 15 metres from the parent plant the campaign concentrated on uncertified pasture seed, birds, livestock and hay as the main causes of spread.

It was also stressed that both practical and effective control methods are available. These include spraying with 2,4-D, mixing 2,4-D powder with superphosphate during top dressing, aerial spraying with a foaming agent and ecological control with pasture.

RESULTS, NEW INFESTATIONS AND CHANGED ATTITUDES

As a result of the publicity, large numbers of thistles were submitted for positive identification and several new infestations were identified.

In addition there has been a marked change in grazier attitude towards nodding thistle. Graziers are now more willing to talk about the weed and it seems that the presence of nodding thistle on a property is no longer regarded as a reason for shame.

NODDING THISTLE DESTRUCTION GROUPS

Directly arising from the awareness campaign and with the assistance of the Severn Shire Council, two groups were formed at Ben Lomond and Dundee. The Ben Lomond group, which is in a relatively heavily infested section, has defined an area and managed to obtain 80 to 90% membership from within the area. The group purchases chemical, organizes assistance for heavily infested properties and generally brings group pressure to bear on members to effectively control their 'Nodders'.

These groups are run by their members, who call on the Department of Agriculture and local government for technical or inspectorial support.

The Weed Inspectors report that in 1975 a high degree of control was achieved in the areas covered by the groups.