

LARGE AREA BLACKBERRY, *RUBUS FRUTICOSUS* AGG.  
CONTROL USING GRAZING GOATS

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*Abstract.* Windemere Dam foreshores comprising an area of 14,500 ha near Mudgee on the Central Tablelands of N.S.W. is currently managed by the Soil Conservation Service. The exclusion of grazing sheep and the change of other management systems following the foreshore resumption dramatically increased the noxious weed burden; particularly blackberry, *Rubus fruticosus* agg., sweet briar, *Rosa rubiginosa* L., and scotch thistle, *Onopordum* spp.. Control of blackberry by ground and aerial spraying had been carried out for several years. Although effective, it proved a difficult and costly technique; mainly due to the steep terrain of the area, dense timber stands and close proximity to water storage.

Blackberry control by goats has been successful in *Pinus radiata* plantations provided livestock management was adequate (1). A pilot scheme by Soil Conservation Service and the Department of Agriculture of N.S.W., was established to assess the impact of goat grazing on woody weed control, and to devise the necessary managerial techniques on Windemere Dam foreshores. This demonstration commenced in October 1985 with the introduction of 1,500 domesticated feral does and concluded in September 1986.

The heavily infested blackberry country was divided into six paddocks and stocking rates varied to observe the effect of goats on the foreshore land. Stocking rates varied from 7 to 12 goats/ha on the more heavily infested sites. Observations of the impact of the grazing by the goats were made on 23 April 1986.

The goats had the following impact on the woody species:

1. Blackberry. No lateral regrowth and complete defoliation of bushes <1 m high. Topside of large bushes was pushed down and small bushes <1.5 m high "mushroomed".
2. Sweet briar. Defoliated within browse reach; 1.5 m high. Fifty percent of stems ringbarked and smaller bushes (<1 m) killed.
3. Scotch thistle and variegated thistle, *Silybum marianum*. Ninety percent eaten and seed production greatly reduced.
4. Woody regrowth. *Acacia* spp. and *Eucalyptus* spp. defoliated within browse reach.

#### REFERENCES

1. Holst, P.J., Dawes, P.D. and Carroll, J.K. 1980. Aust. Weeds Res. Newsletter 29, 20-21.