

COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO CONTAINING NOOGOORA BURR  
IN THE NORTH OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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*Abstract.* Noogoora burr, *Xanthium* spp., is established on an estimated 50,000 ha of the Ord and Fitzroy river systems in the Kimberley region in the north of Western Australia. Eradication of the burr has been achieved on parts of the Ord River after 15 years of chemical control work involving a workforce of up to 50. Eradication is being attempted in several other small and isolated areas, but containment is the only realistic objective for the remaining major areas. Noogoora burr presents a major threat to the wool producing areas of W.A. south of the Kimberley.

Prevention of spread. Cattle production, the main agricultural industry in the burr areas, is not greatly affected by Noogoora burr, nor are recreational fishing, tourism and aboriginal communities. However these activities are a major spread risk. Co-operation of pastoralists, recreational travellers and indigenous communities is thus essential to prevent further spread of Noogoora burr.

Community co-operation. Strategies to achieve community support in the Fitzroy basin are planned and co-ordinated by a Noogoora Burr Working Party comprising pastoral, local government, tourism, conservation authority and APB representatives. The main strategies are controlled public access to the infested sections of the Fitzroy River and controlled movement of cattle and equipment, supported by a public awareness campaign.

Pastoral properties. All cattle properties adjoining the Fitzroy River for 250 km upstream from the river mouth are in quarantine for Noogoora burr. Livestock, fodder, hides and manure from quarantined properties must be free from Noogoora burr before being moved off the property. Cattle are inspected by the APB before leaving the property. Vehicles or machinery used for agricultural or earthmoving purposes on quarantined land must be cleaned and inspected by an APB officer. The APB receives a high degree of co-operation from the operators of quarantined properties.

Public access. About 27,000 ha is infested with Noogoora burr along the Fitzroy River. Public access is allowed to seven sections representing about 1% of the river banks, with the co-operation of the pastoral properties involved. These sections are kept free of Noogoora burr plants by the APB to reduce the risk of burrs being carried out of the area. The access and quarantine areas are clearly defined by signposts. A survey of recreational travellers showed 98% agreed with the access restrictions.

Indigenous communities. Several aboriginal community stations are in the Fitzroy quarantine area. These stations support fairly large populations of people who use the river extensively for hunting, fishing and swimming. Aboriginal rangers have been appointed on some of these stations to supervise some control work and educate the communities about the need to prevent the spread of burr on vehicles, camping gear and pets.