

Eradication of wheel cactus from WA: setting priorities to achieve outcomes

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Summary In order to provide a rigorous and objective method for prioritising government actions associated with declared plants in WA, a decision tool was developed to demonstrate the likely agricultural impacts of those declared plants. This decision tool utilized declared pest ranking assessment by an expert panel and an economic benefit cost analysis. The resulting list was used to determine a list of 15 High Priority species that potentially have the greatest impact on agriculture. Five of the High Priority species were cacti.

As a consequence of the naming of opuntoid cacti as Weeds of National Significance, 27 cacti species were declared under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* in December 2014. Control of a number of cactus infestations using various methods including spraying and biological control had taken place in Western Australia for a number of decades. Declaration and delineation as High Priority species

increased the focus on these weeds for both government and community weed management activity.

With limited and reducing resources, a subsequent process was undertaken to prioritise cacti species for action by the Invasive Species program within the Department of Agriculture and Food. The prioritization matrix that was developed scored each species according to declaration status, its spread method, availability of effective control methods, number and size of recorded sites in WA, the potential for biological control and, most importantly, the presence and willingness of a biosecurity group to commit to control. Wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta* H.L.Wendl. ex Pfeiff.) scored highest through this process. This presentation describes the cactus prioritization matrix and the subsequent action to eradicate wheel cactus from WA.

Keywords Prioritisation, matrix, cactus, wheel cactus, biosecurity group.