

Invasive grasses management program – piloting a different approach to an old problem

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Summary Worldwide, grasses are desirable species due to their value as pasture, crops, and as amenity and soil stabilisation plantings. These productive and competitive traits, coupled with a history of introduction spanning over 200 years, have resulted in exotic grasses becoming some of Australia's most problematic weeds. Although many introduced species were selected for their palatability, a sub-set of species that are fast-growing, with high biomass, high seed production and variable palatability have become particularly problematic.

Invasive grasses invade and impact both pastures and conservation areas, often forming dense monocultures that transform both natural and productive environments. The challenge of managing exotic perennial grasses is complex. Contributing factors to this are:

- Invasive grasses are difficult to identify (and can be confused with native species)
- The Influence of climatic events such as drought, fire and flood on management success
- Outdated best practice management information
- A lack of coordinated research, development and engagement (RD&E) effort.

Managing landscape scale infestations is extremely challenging so focussing on preventing

establishment and strategies to live with infestations is also necessary.

The National Invasive Grasses Management Program will be the first initiative to emerge from the Centre for Invasive Species Solution Centre's 10 Year Weeds RD&E Plan 2020-30. The initial phase of the Program is being led by the NSW Government's Department of Primary Industries, with funding from the NSW and Australian Governments as well as Meat and Livestock Australia. The program will invest in invasive grass activities, with an emphasis on engagement and promotion of holistic management approaches to deliver benefits broader than just weed management. It will pilot an engagement approach focussed around a series of action-oriented sites with land managers testing science against their experiences and knowledge and adapting, as necessary, to local conditions. The initial focus is on seven Proof and Demonstration Sites across three states and around 40 Adaptation Sites across all states and the ACT.

Keywords Invasive grass management, research development and engagement