

Lippia under the spotlight

Scientists, government managers, and landowners from three states have met near Narrabri to map out a research program to manage the weed Lippia.

Lippia is a scourge of the banks of watercourses and pastures in northern NSW and southern Queensland and is a threat throughout the Murray–Darling River system.

“There is no question that Lippia is already a serious problem to pasture production and to our natural heritage of biodiversity in the river system,” said Dr Gary Fitt, CEO of the Australian Cotton Cooperative Research Centre (CRC).

“It is also an extremely difficult problem to manage, with no easy answers. Our job was to consider the whole range of possible weed management tactics that could be developed for the weed, and to set research priorities.”

Dr Rick Roush, CEO of the CRC for Australian Weed Management, added: “Many landowners have been interested in biological control of the weed. Biocontrol is a particular strength of our CRC, and in many cases we have found natural enemies overseas for imported weeds like Lippia.”

“But a difficulty here is that Lippia is closely related to a native plant in Australia and we have to be careful that any biocontrols we develop won’t harm that or any other desirable species.

“Also, the research for biocontrol will cost several hundred thousand dollars, and funding is tight everywhere”.

“Lippia is a particularly important problem in the riparian zones of cotton growing regions of NSW and Queensland.” said Gary Fitt.

“Our CRC and the cotton industry generally are trying to assist where we can in its management, but this is an issue for all landholders of floodplain country.”

Some 30 people from NSW, Queensland and



Robyn Watson “Kilmarnock” Boggabri, Assoc. Prof. Wal Whalley UNE, James Croft Chairman Gwydir Catchment Management Board Uralla and Leanne Melbourne landholder Narrabri.



Vic Melbourne, farmer, Yarral, Narrabri; Guy Roth Research Manager Cotton Research and Development Corporation; Dr Gary Fitt CEO Cotton CRC.

South Australia attended the meeting, which was held at the Australian Cotton Research Institute (ACRI) near Narrabri. They represented a total of 20 organisations spanning landholders, R&D organisations, catchment boards, conservation groups, universities and state government agencies.

NSW Agriculture Weeds Program leader, Richard Carter, said the part of the solution to Lippia is finding replacement plants.

“Biological control will only be a success if we have suitable replacement plants. We need the ability to cheaply establish replacement pasture plants.

“NSW Agriculture has developed herbicide treatments for Lippia and obtained permits for these treatments” Richard said.

The Lippia meeting was jointly organised by the Australian Cotton Cooperative Research Centre, based at the ACRI, and the Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management based in Adelaide.

Both centres, which were established by the Commonwealth Government, include CSIRO, NSW Agriculture, Queensland DPI and the University of New England among their participants, and are supported by the Cotton and Grains Research and Development Corporations (respectively).

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