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NRM Plan

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CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

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Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus aggregate*)

Reducing its impact in the Northern and Yorke NRM Region

Description of this weed

Blackberry has been designated a Weed of National Significance for Australia. The name blackberry covers at least 14 different but closely related species that have become naturalised in Australia. It is restricted to temperate climates with an annual rainfall of at least 700mm, however it can grow in lower rainfall areas when other environmental conditions are favourable.

Blackberry is a perennial, semi-deciduous shrub with prickly stems that take root where they touch the ground. The root system is the only perennial part of the plant and the main root can grow down to four metres depending on the soil type. The stems may be green, purplish or red, are generally thorny, moderately hairy and grow to 7m long.

The leaves are usually dark green on top with a lighter green underside. The leaf veins and stalks are covered with short prickles. The flowers are white or pink and 2-3cms in diameter, they grow in clusters and these form either a cylinder or pyramid depending on the species.

The 1-3cm berries change colour from green to red to black as they ripen. One berry can contain as many as 80 seeds.

Why is it a weed and what is the impact?

Blackberry can produce vegetatively or by seed. The seeds are dispersed over long distances by birds, mammals and water. Recreational users and bushwalkers can also spread seed, as can moving soil from place to place. Blackberry roots can also be spread through cultivation or by floodwaters to clean areas.

Blackberry reduces the productivity of primary industries and restricts access to land and water. It degrades the natural environment and affects biodiversity, including providing harbour and food for vermin and creating fire hazards.

Blackberry has invaded the banks of watercourses, bushland, roadsides, forests, plantations and orchards throughout temperate Australia. Blackberry can quickly smother other vegetation under a dense canopy.





What can you do? – Some methods of control

Different blackberry species react differently to herbicide and biological control agents, therefore it is very important to correctly identify which species you are dealing with. Your local NRM Authorised Officer can assist you with identification.

There is a leaf rust (*Phragmidium violaceum*) biological control for blackberry that is now present throughout all areas of southern Australia where blackberries are a problem. Different blackberry species vary in their susceptibility to the rust and the rust fungi have established well in some high rainfall areas but have failed to have an impact elsewhere.

Mechanical

Hand weeding can be done in very small infestations, however even seedlings and small plants can be difficult to pull out by hand. The entire root system must be removed as the blackberry can regrow from any fragment of root left in the soil.

Chemical

The best time to spray is during the fruiting/flowering period. Only herbicides registered for the control of blackberry or authorised under a permit should be used. A range of methods can be used including foliar spray, cut and swab, granules or gel.

Please contact your local NRM Authorised Officer for advice on chemical control.

Further information

CRC Weed Management Guide;
Weeds of National Significance;
Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus* aggregate

Help and Assistance

NRM Authorised Officers

Snowtown – 8865 2166
Riverton – 8847 2544
Minlaton – 8853 2795
Port Augusta – 8641 1513
Peterborough – 8651 3577
Orroroo – 8658 1086

