

Managing pest plants

PEST PLANT CONTROL IN THE LOWER MID-NORTH DISTRICT

A pest plant or weed is a plant that grows where it is not wanted. In most cases, agricultural or environmental pest plants have been introduced into an environment and become overabundant.

Pest plants often arrive unintentionally, carried into the district or onto properties by machinery, vehicles and animals, attached to clothing or footwear, or embedded in hay and fodder.

They can compete with crops and pasture for moisture and nutrients; contaminate crops; compete with native flora and fauna; reduce the agricultural and conservation value of the land; and in some cases they may be toxic to people, livestock and native animals.

Pest plants have a major impact on Australia's agricultural productivity and environment. Each year, more than four billion dollars is lost through decreased production and the cost of control programs.

How are pest plants categorised?

Pest plants are categorised based on how invasive they are, their potential to spread and their environmental, economic and social impact.

Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) are very invasive, high impact pests that are difficult to manage without a coordinated management program. There are 32 pest plants on the WoNS list and their management is coordinated nationally between all levels of government, as well as organisations like Natural Resources Northern and Yorke Region and individual landholders.

Alert List weeds are non-native weeds that have established naturalised populations in the wild. They are likely to pose a serious risk to the environment, but are currently of limited distribution nationally. With appropriate intervention, Alert List weeds can be successfully contained or eradicated.

Declared plants are those that present a significant threat to agriculture, the environment and public health and safety. They are supported by legislation.

Priority weeds are not restricted to WoNS or declared plants, but have been identified as a priority plant to manage within a particular district or region.

Managing pest plants is important to help reduce their impact on the environment and to stop them from spreading further.

Priority plants Lower Mid-North District

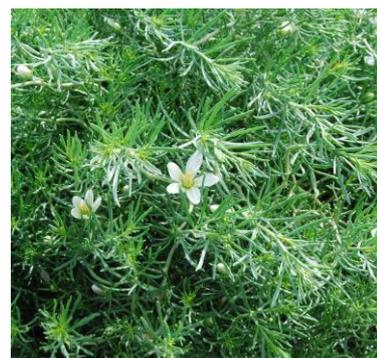
Silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*) – **WoNS**



Silverleaf nightshade has infested thousands of hectares of agricultural land in the region, reducing crop and pasture production. It develops large interconnecting root systems within colonies and spreads as seeds and root sections. A highly competitive and persistent plant, silverleaf

nightshade can be toxic to stock and horses.

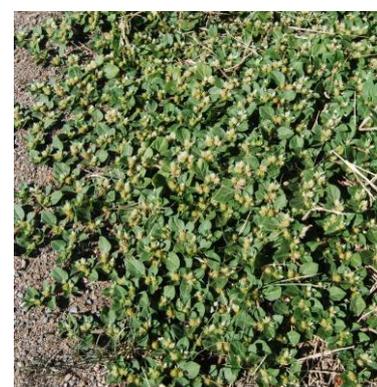
African rue (*Peganum harmala*) – **declared plant**



African rue is a deep-rooted perennial shrub that competes with native vegetation and pasture. It contains alkaloids that taste bitter to domestic and feral grazing animals, which inhibit the germination and growth of other plants. A drought tolerant plant, African rue reproduces from seed and

by suckering from its extensive root system. It can be spread along watercourses by vehicles and in mud attached to animals.

Khaki weed (*Alternanthera pungens*) – **declared plant**



Khaki weed is a prostrate herb with a perennial root system and annual top growth. Produced as either a single spine or a spiny burr, the seeds can become lodged in tyres, shoes, clothing, animal fur and wool, spreading over large areas. The stem of khaki weed can also form roots at the node, increasing patch

size very quickly. The spines cause mouth and foot problems for grazing stock and working animals.



Innocent weed (*Cenchrus longispinus*, *C. incertus*) – declared plant



An annual grass, innocent weed produces small barbed burrs that can contaminate wool, hides and seed crops. Heavy infestations can prevent working dogs from being used in the area, while burrs may cause ulcers when they become stuck in the mouths of grazing stock. Innocent weed

spreads when burrs attach to wool or are carried by machinery, clothing, in produce and contaminated seed. It establishes in low fertility dry sandy soils and other disturbed areas.

Creeping knapweed (*Rhaponticum repens*) – declared plant



A perennial herb with an extensive creeping root system, creeping knapweed can grow up to one metre high. Although it mainly spreads by seed, new plants can grow from fragmented root sections. Creeping knapweed is potentially poisonous to stock and is very difficult to eradicate once established

Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) – declared plant



An introduced perennial pasture plant, buffel grass can dominate the ground layers in many plant communities. Used in other parts of Australia as a pasture plant and to minimise dust, buffel grass can reduce plant diversity over time. Pasture production may also decline. Seeds are spread by wind, water and

animals. Dry buffel grass foliage forms a continuous flammable ground layer. It can carry intense and extensive fires at much shorter intervals than the native understory, altering native plant communities over time.

Other declared pest plants in Lower Mid North District include:

Caltrop (*Tribulus terrestris*), horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), wild artichoke (*Cynara cardunculus*), African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) and Lincoln weed (*Diploptaxis tenuifolia*).

Pest plants – whose responsibility?

Pest plants don't recognise property boundaries. By working collaboratively, Natural Resources Northern & Yorke and landholders have the best chance of controlling priority pest plants in the Lower Mid-North District.

Each pest plant has a different life cycle and characteristics. Management should be targeted for each plant type. Often, a combination of methods will be required to achieve effective control. Vehicle, plant and equipment hygiene is also important.

Private land:

Landholders have a legal responsibility, under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, to control declared plants on their land. They should know their pest plants, their responsibilities and the resources that are available to them.

On roadsides:

Roadsides are part of public road reserves, which are owned by the Crown. Under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, regional NRM boards are responsible for ensuring that declared pest plants are controlled on roadsides.

Landholders are encouraged to control declared plants on roadsides that adjoin their property. Where the Board undertakes the work, under the NRM Act, landholders may be issued with accounts.

As approvals may be required, landholders should contact the Natural Resources Centre Clare, before undertaking control work on roadsides. Care should also be taken to avoid any off-target damage to native vegetation.

Natural Resources Centre Clare can provide the following support:

- A free weed identification service to help landholders determine if pest plants are present on their property.
- Advice about the most appropriate management method for plants on their property.

The Northern & Yorke NRM Board encourages landholders to work together to control pest plants across districts.

For more information

Natural Resources Centre Northern and Yorke

Unit 2/17 Lennon Street Clare

P (08) 8841 3400

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/northernandyorke

Control Methods

Biosecurity SA Weed Control Handbook

www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa

Weed Management Guides for WoNS weeds

www.weeds.org.au/WoNS

SA Weed Control App (free) available from App Store.

Images provided by DEWNR and Biosecurity SA.



Government of South Australia



Natural Resources Northern and Yorke