

ACT Rural Landholders' Association

DISCUSSION TOPICS – AFRICAN LOVE GRASS

1. ECOLOGY

- o Loss of biodiversity of grassy woodlands in the ACT
- o Mono culture, loss of biodiversity, biological desert
- o Existing natural grasslands may have 50 + species of native grasses
- o Eventually trees and shrubs must be affected due to lack of natural systems

Q1 How many millions or billions of plant and animals are being lost in the ACT every year?

Compared to kangaroo issue:

- o the only environmental problem is that there are too many
- o it is political
- o community is generally aware
- o Gets media coverage
- o They are big and we can see them

2. RATE OF SPREAD

Case Study a farm adjacent to MRC

30 years ago = zero infestation

20 years ago = 5% cover

10 years ago = 15%

now = 80%

last 3 years cover has gone from 45% to 80% it has an exponential rate of spread.

2.1 *Extrapolation*

Number of hectares of rural land from Lanyon to Tidbinbilla is ?? Ha

Therefore the rate of cover in this area is ?? based on the rate of spread.

2.2 *Rehabilitation*

Cost to rehabilitate love grass infested land is \$1000 per Ha in flat, arable, previously cultivated country. Such treatment lasts from 2-5 years.

Q2 If /when current exponential growth continues when will all the ACTs lowland grassland be lost? Say 10-20 years ?

Q3 Does this mean that environmental management in the ACT has failed or will fail?

3. IMPLICATIONS

3.1 *Reserve Areas*

It is worse for Reserve areas as:

- o no stock for control
- o sparse management systems
- o poorer steeper country
- o 90% cover in many areas
- o 100% loss of biodiversity
- o staff move on and do not have to worry about the future
- o restoration impossible
- o physical danger, difficult for vehicles, walking, 4 wheel bikes not possible.

Q 4 What does the spread of love grass mean for intergenerational equity? What right does the current generation have to degrade land for future generations?

3.2 *Farms*

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- Stock are very reluctant to eat love grass
- Accelerated rate of decline in carrying capacity with following implications:

- Future generations
- Cash flows/ viability
- Moral strength to continue

It is estimated by some experienced farmers that productivity is reduced by 75%. That is a farm previously carrying 200 cows will carry 50.

3.3 **Danger**

- It is very dangerous for vehicles, (tractors, bikes as you cannot see rocks, logs etc.
- There is no known solution that is technically feasible and economically viable, there are many examples of failure.

4. **FIRE RISK**

- This is a huge and relatively unrecognized hazard.
- Love grass is tall, dense and highly flammable
- Farm areas can no longer serve as the buffer between National Parks and Forestry areas and the city as they are now highly flammable – the jungle has moved to the city.

5. **LAND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS (LMAs)**

These are meaningless unless all parties take action, and this requires a major change to the current position, which is highly unlikely unless urgent action is taken.

6. **POLICY**

- Change priorities

Q5 What does the ACT Weeds Strategy say about African love grass?

Q6 What happened to the consultant (Geoff Butler) report for ACT Government agency (David Busby) written some (15) years ago?

7. **ACTION AND REPORTING**

- Change of attitude
- Stop making excuses
- Get quick spray units working not sitting in sheds and driving along roads not being utilised

Q7 What government action is being taken to apply policy?

Q8 Is this currently the greatest environmental threat in the ACT? If not what is?

Q9 What does the State of the Environment Report say about this threat?

8. **COMMUNITY NEEDS**

- Strong leadership
- Think strategically
- Face the facts
- Gather the information
- Consider the future
- Political and community awareness
- Incentives and disincentives
- Money and actions

Q10 Why is the powerful Green lobby not pushing this issue?

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