

NOXIOUS WEED FACT SHEET

Just what is a noxious weed?

Many landholders – both resident and absentee – don't understand the problems caused to the natural environment, prime agricultural land, and animal or human health by the effects of noxious weeds. Nor do they fully understand the legal and moral obligations they have in having to control noxious weeds on their land.

Statistically, Wingecarribee Shire has a high turnover of new property owners, many of them from the populated cities where noxious weeds are not considered a priority to them. The city-folk are understandably searching for that idyllic rural retreat close to home. Many of these properties for sale have varying degrees of noxious weed infestations growing on them. More often than not, buyers are totally unaware of what a noxious weed is, and overlook them completely, or don't consider them a problem at the moment. Many potential buyers are also unaware of the procedures involving noxious weeds and the legal obligations binding all landholders/occupiers. All weeds declared noxious in Wingecarribee shire are highly invasive and detrimental to both the environment, grazing land, and to animal health – and human health, in the case of St John's Wort, and the problem faced by the financial burden noxious weeds can bring upon a new landowner.

A large percentage of properties in our shire have infestations of noxious weeds that are relatively small and easily controlled. Unfortunately, many landholders choose to ignore the weeds, believing they are not a problem. Subsequently, they increase in size and population over the years until they end up becoming economically and physically difficult to control. One mature plant of Serrated Tussock for example can disperse up to eighty thousand viable seeds into the wind that will carry for a vast distance, well-known to be up to 40 kilometers. The effect on down-wind properties is obvious, and seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to twenty-years, instantly creating a potential nightmare for the unfortunate landowner that may at present have a weed free property, or at least tries hard to eradicate them.

Fortunately, there are also many pro-active and co-operative landholders in our shire that do the right thing and manage their land as the valuable asset it truly is. It is unfair that these people should have to bear the consequences of neighbors who do not control their own weeds through ignorance.

The Noxious Weeds Act 1993 was established so that a fair system exists, enabling enforcement of noxious weed control on properties where landholders were not meeting their obligations.

Apart from the Noxious Weeds Act 1993, Wingecarribee Shire Council is continually formulating strategies that work in conjunction with the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 to provide a holistic approach to weed management. The strategy for Serrated Tussock for example, will endeavor to educate landholders, facilitate workshops, and assist in coordinating weed-control on both a regional and a local basis.

A revised Noxious Weed Policy adopted by Council in 2006 will mean that landholders who are reluctant to control their noxious weeds may face an on-the-spot fine of \$200.00 including a fee of \$220.00 being for Council costs incurred in re-inspecting a property encumbered by a Section 18 Weed Control Notice. If the reluctant landholder still chooses to ignore the noxious weeds, enforced entry to control the weeds may be undertaken to have the noxious weeds controlled in order to protect the neighbors and surrounding environment.

The new Policy also brings Wingecarribee into line with the newly amended Noxious Weeds Act 1993. Inspection procedures have been changed and adopted, allowing Council to act quickly to ensure noxious weeds are controlled before they seed and infest other properties. Potential purchasers of land should always request their Solicitor to obtain a Section 64 Certificate from Council to ascertain if properties have a Section 18 Weed Control Notice current, as control costs of inherited weed problems can be very expensive.

For further information regarding noxious weeds, the Noxious weeds Act 1993, or the revised Noxious Weeds Policy, visit Councils website, or contact the Weeds Officer, on 4860 3016 or 48680888.