

UPFRONT OUTBACK



POPPING PILLS



Our intrepid field team supervisor, the indefatigable Peter Spence, has been busy teaching all and sundry how to pop pills. These aren't your ordinary pills, these little fellows are supercharged with a, hopefully, deadly chemical.

For our latest techno tool for Prickly Acacia eradication, we've been trialling Di-Bak G, glyphosate filled, soluble capsules that are drilled and sealed into the trunks of PA trees within what we call the buffer zone around native trees. Anywhere inside 30 metres from the drip line of a native tree, the use of the residual chemical, tebuthiuron runs the risk of killing that tree. Historically, all PA trees inside the buffer were hand sprayed, which is expensive, slow and labour intensive.

However, our recent advances in misting techniques has us revolutionising PA control amongst native trees – we've perfected misting chemicals, ratios and droplet sizes that don't affect native trees, only Prickly Acacia. The problem is that in many areas along creeks, we can't get close enough with the mister because of the big PA trees; that's where our latest pill popping craze comes into it.

By taking out the big PA trees with the Di-Bak G capsules, we are hoping to open up access for the misting machines to get in and clean up the rest in a really cost-effective manner. We're confident that the current trials, funded by the Australian Government under our Weed Outlier project, will deliver yet another cost reduction and effective tool to the landholders helping us get on top of this once unstoppable pest plant.

The Di-Bak G pills have to be popped into those PA trees the right way, which is why Peter Spence has been out demonstrating the correct drilling, inserting and plugging technique to Winton's RESQ staff, DCQ Landcare, DCQ On-ground Team and the Lake Eyre Basin Rangers. It's great to have lots of pill poppers... can't have too much of a good thing.

NYMPHANNIHILATION



Property owners Peter and Elizabeth Clark of Leander have been battling a Coral Cactus infestation on their place for over 20 years, and wondering if they would ever win. In April last year, Biosecurity Queensland staff released nymphs of the cochineal (*Dactylopius tomentosus* – fulgida biotype) insect on Coral Cactus at our Leander trial site.

Quarterly monitoring showed that the wind-borne insects had spread 40 metres by October last year... cautious optimism was beginning to creep into the thoughts of the Clarks, Biosecurity Queensland and the DCQ team.

There were around 3000 cactus plants at the trial site when the little nymphs started doing their stuff; three months ago, there were 400; today, 9. What a coup for the hardworking research team at Biosecurity Queensland, what reward for the persistence of the DCQ weed team, and what a relief for the Clarks.

And Snake Cactus had better be wary... early next year we'll be coordinating the release of a special little nymph... just for it.

TECHNO TRAPPING



At the beginning of October, more than 40 landholders, Indigenous rangers, local government and agency staff, as well as students and industry reps gathered at the Longreach Pastoral College for a Landcare demonstration day of the latest in remotely operated feral pig traps.

Nigel Kimball of Yarramine Environmental, the Australian agents for the Jager Pro system, took the crowd through the process of setting up the traps with their patented drop gates monitored and activated over the mobile phone network or, in more remote areas, via a UHF repeater network. He also covered pig trapping strategies including trap design and placement, and pre feeding.

The American made Jager Pro system involves remote camera monitoring of the trap during a pre-feeding period where feral pigs become accustomed to the trap as a feed source, and the trapper becomes familiar with the behaviour and size of the mob. When the pigs are sufficiently relaxed about the whole thing, and all the mob is in the trap, the trapper triggers the drop gate with a tap on their mobile phone.

While the Jager Pro system has a higher initial cost than conventional traps, it is cheaper and easier to run, is easily portable and expandable, and doesn't involve continuous contamination of the trapping site with human and other foreign scents.

Our Central West Feral Pig Program has purchased two of these systems for use in feral pig hot spots around the region.

PRACTICAL PLACEMENT



Natalie Pearce doesn't do things by half: after completing her senior year, she did a Rotary student exchange to northwest Austria (just for the experience); then, after returning home, started a double degree in Agriculture and Business at the University of New England in Armidale; and is spending her summer break from uni in a practical placement as a special projects officer with DCQ.

Having grown up on Strathmore Station south of Longreach, Natalie is no stranger to rural issues in western Queensland, but she hopes to learn even more about what's going on and how to fix it, by working on those same issues from the natural resource management perspective.

For the next three months, Natalie will be working on our Tebuthiuron monitoring program, as well as data collection and ongoing weed control trials. Given her rural background and interest in agriculture, Natalie is looking forward to meeting landholders as she goes about her work around the region.

WEB WEAVING



The Australian Invasive Cacti Network...

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Cacti are one of the greatest invasive plant threats to Australia with major infestations in all mainland states and territories, apart from the ACT. They pose a threat to much of the arid and semi-arid parts of Australia with at least 27 species of opuntoid cacti now established weeds.

Much of Australia's climate is perfect for them and, with no natural enemies to hinder their advance, they are a grave threat to our grazing industries by limiting grass growth, hindering access and injuring stock and handlers. They can also devastate wildlife through impalement or the lodgement of spiny segments in limbs, hides and mouths, leading to immobilisation and a painful death.

Which is where the Australian Invasive Cacti Network comes in. The AICN is a network of like-minded people working to reduce the impact of invasive cacti on our primary production and biodiversity. And with our help, they've woven the story of cactus in Australia, along with ID, control, history and much more, into a new website (www.aicn.org.au) with the latest information, photos and contact details. Check it out.

TAKE A CHANCE



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For those who remember Bob Hudson's 1975 hit, The Newcastle Song, when there's a break in the traffic, 'Don't you ever let a chance go by...' So if you get that break in the traffic, and you have time to think about how you could make use of up to \$100,000 (strings attached, you might be interested in the National Landcare Program Smart Farms Small Grants Round for 2017-018.

This two tiered program (Tier 1: \$5000 – \$50,000; Tier 2: \$50,001 – \$100,000) closes on 7th December 2017, and projects need to be completed by 30th April 2020. These Smart Farms Small Grants are to increase land managers' awareness, knowledge, capability and adoption of

tools and management practices that will deliver more productive and profitable agriculture, fishing, aquaculture and farm forestry industries; protect Australia's biodiversity; protect and improve the condition of natural resources (in particular soils and vegetation); and assist Australia meet its obligations under relevant international treaties.

Check out the [Community Grants Hub](#) for more info and how to apply.

FIND A FRIEND

National Landcare Program – Smart Farming Partnerships, at a different spot on the Community Grants Hub website, closes on 21st December 2017. This program will support partnerships between experienced organisations and individuals to deliver sustainable agriculture practice changes through the development, trial and implementation of new and innovative tools and farm practices. Sound like you? ... phone a friend.

MAKE A FRIEND



A friend in need is a friend indeed and there is no greater friend when you are in need in the back blocks than the RFDS. The Royal Flying Doctor Service is holding a field day at the jewel of the Desert Uplands, Lake Dunn, north east of Aramac on 15th November. There will be the regular RAFS playgroup, health talks, CPR practice, canteen and lunch, as well as updates from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Rural Finance Counselling Services, DCQ, Rural Fires, Central West Hospital and Health Services and University Queensland Edgbaston research. Bring a friend, make a friend, be a friend. RSVP to Liz Lynch on 4652 5800.