



MEDIA RELEASE

Queensland Weed Expert Visits Top End

A Queensland weed expert committed to reducing the impact of bellyache bush from the Australian landscape is in the Top End today to inspect sites where the weed is found.

Dr Wayne Vogler, a weed scientist with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water's Tropical Weeds Research Centre, said his visit would focus on knowledge sharing and collaboration with Northern Territory colleagues and land managers on control methods targeted towards bellyache bush including biological control, fire, herbicides and mechanical techniques.

"Bellyache bush is a South American weed that out compete a lot of native plants including pasture grasses and is toxic if consumed by people or livestock," Dr Vogler said.

"Dense infestations of bellyache bush can produce a million seeds per hectare each month during the wet season, meaning it has the potential to spread rapidly further impacting negatively on surrounding native flora and fauna."

Dr Vogler said a South American bug called *Agonosoma* has been released in the Northern Territory and Queensland to combat the weed, although its establishment in the field was in its infancy.

He said the bug feeds on immature fruit thereby destroying the seeds before they fully develop.

"*Agonosoma* is the first biological control agent released for bellyache bush control in the Northern Territory and north Queensland and I am particularly interested to see how this and other control activities are progressing," Dr Vogler said.

"Bellyache bush is not one of Australia's 20 Weeds of National Significance as it in fact ranked 21st but it is a significant threat to pastoral productivity and the natural environment in northern Australia.

"While the resources allocated to the fight against it might not be as substantial as other high profile weeds such as mimosa, it is a growing problem that is being addressed."

Dr Vogler said his visit to the Top End was linked to his role with the Co-operative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management that involves working closely together with weeds staff from the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts and CSIRO.

Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts Katherine regional weeds officer Claire Hill said Dr Vogler's visit would have wide reaching benefits for Territorians.

"Not only will NRETA staff be able to exchange information with Dr Vogler, it will also provide increased knowledge to Landcare groups in the Roper River and Victoria River Districts to assist in their control efforts with this weed," Ms Hill said.

Dr Vogler will visit bellyache bush sites near the Western Australian towns of Kununurra and Wyndham once his trip to the Top End is complete.

Media Note _ For more information contact Dr Wayne Vogler on 07 4787 0607 or 0427 765 506 or Claire Hill on 8973 8107.

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