

**Media Release:**

**12.09.11**

## **Weeds Under Weevil Attack**

After 15 years in hiding, a green seed feeding weevil has resurfaced in the Territory and is stopping the spread of declared weed *Mimosa pigra* (mimosa) by attacking developing mimosa seed.

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) Weed Management Officer Bert Lukitsch said the weevil, *Chalcodermus serripes*, was originally released in the mid-1990s but seemingly failed to establish anywhere in the Territory – until now.

“The weevil is the only mimosa bio-control agent that directly attacks developing seed, and when present in high densities of mimosa, the weevil can actually prevent the plant from making seed,” Mr Lukitsch said.

“This is great news, considering that a mature mimosa plant produces an average of 9000 seeds per year that are easily spread by water, animals and people.

“Identified by its distinctive gold sheen and golf ball dimples, NRETAS weeds officers have confirmed the weevil has been located in the Adelaide and Daly River catchments, as well as locally in the Darwin region.”

Weevils attack developing mimosa seed by feeding on flowers, tips of branches and immature seed pods, or laying eggs into developing seed in the pod so that the weevil larvae feeds by hollowing out the seed that they hatched within.

Mr Lukitsch said weevil larvae are dormant in the Dry season when their food source isn't around; however dormancy breaks in response to the first rains.

“As the Wet season approaches, we can expect to see the impact of weevils on mimosa as they breed rapidly and spread in response to flowering mimosa,” Mr Lukitsch said.

“Mimosa is a prickly shrub from South America that has become a weed throughout the tropical areas of the globe, and is classified as a Weed of National Significance in Australia.

“It has infested more than 80 000 ha of Top End floodplains and threatens native flora, and bio-control methods like that from the green seed feeding weevil are a consistent and natural part of the project to fight this destructive weed.

“NRETAS weeds officers will continue to monitor the spread of the weevil into the Wet season and track its progress in the fight against mimosa.”

Ends

**Media Note – for more information contact Bert Lukitsch on 8999 2380.**

**Images – *Chalcodermus serripes* and *Chalcodermus* larvae**

Issued: 8.30am Monday, 12 September 2011.