

Post fire weed management

Weeds are not likely to be on people's minds immediately following a wildfire burning through their property. However to minimize effort, cost and inconvenience in the future there are several things worth doing even when the pressure is huge to get your property working again.

There has been a wealth of experience and information come from the catastrophic fires in the Black Saturday fires in Victoria that is directly applicable. Exotic species more rapidly colonise post fire landscape where the competing native and/or agricultural plants are burnt. The movement of vehicles and machinery in response to the fire emergency and then the post fire recovery will increase the incidence of weed seed movement

We can reduce the spread of weeds simply by being aware and adopting some simple protocols.

Fast facts

Weeds re-establish quickly after fires

Hygiene practices are vital for machinery and tools

Hay and grain can spread weeds

Prevention of weeds now can save big costs in the future



Above: Tasman Council working with machinery operator to wash-down a dozer, an important weed hygiene practice. Photo: J.Milne

In the post fire recovery phase

Vehicle and machinery hygiene:

- When service providers, contractors and volunteers come onto your property request that machinery, tools, vehicles, clothing are free of soil and weed material. Refer to the link below for hygiene protocols for vehicles and heavy machinery http://www.nrmsouth.org.au/uploaded/287/15130799_22keepingitcleanweb.pdf
- Identify areas on your property that have serious weed problems – work in these areas last and clean down after working there prior to working in clean areas
- When vehicles from areas outside the fire impacted area return home wash them down in a designated area and monitor for weed establishment – we do not wish to spread such weeds as serrated tussock

Management of feeding out of emergency fodder

- Feed out hay and grain in designated areas that can later be regularly and easily monitored of the establishment of weeds.
- Fire can cause soil to become hydrophobic – which causes greater runoff –so try to establish emergency feeding areas away from waterways



Above: A burnt pampas bush regenerating after fire on the Arthur Highway between Murdunna.

Photo: J. Milne

In the medium term of post fire phase – up to 1 year

Hygiene and weed surveillance:

- Monitor areas used for feeding out emergency fodder for emerging weeds and treat accordingly
- Continue to enforce soil hygiene practices
- When replacing machinery or infrastructure ensure that any second hand machinery or materials are clean. Preferably clean at the point of purchase.
- Monitor fire breaks and areas that have been burnt for emerging weeds.

Stock management:

- Consider agistment rather than long term hand feeding to protect soil and decrease the likelihood of weed establishment.
- Quarantine incoming replacement stock in defined places for weed seeds they may be carrying or have eaten. Monitor the area and treat as necessary. Try to buy sheep that have been freshly shorn.

In the long term of post fire phase – 1- 3 years out

Weeds re-establish after fire as they are often early colonisers or may have deep roots that can re-shoot after even intense fire. Also the increased vehicle movement associated with the emergency fire response may have resulted in weed spread both by seed and through vegetation.

Hygiene and weed surveillance:

- Be alert to plants you have not seen before or tussock grass that your stock will not eat. Get samples identified. Rapid control of an emerging weed problem will save effort.
- Monitor known weed infestations. Moderate to high intensity fire will allow access to previous thickets and stimulate seed germination and deplete soil stored seed. Fire will provide an opportunity to tackle established weed infestations of woody weeds
- Prioritise management by priority weed species and forest threats to farming and biodiversity assets

Bushfire Survival Plan

Many woody weeds create dense continuous low ground cover that will carry a high intensity fire or create an avenue for fire to carry into a tree canopy.

- Consider the control of woody weeds near farm assets as part of the strategic protection of property.
- Consider the location of strategic stock containment areas to hold stock during periods of high fire danger days.



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