

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES About us and our services



Industry & Investment

Home » About us and our services » News and events » News » Agriculture

NEWS AND EVENTS

News releases

[NSW DPI news feed](#)

[Agriculture](#)

[Fishing and aquaculture](#)

[Forests](#)

[Minerals and petroleum](#)

[General](#)

[Ministerial](#)

[Events](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Minfo](#)

[Bush Telegraph Magazine](#)

[Agriculture Today](#)

[Media contacts](#)

Promoting pastures to combat fireweed

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More than 200 Hunter Valley and South Coast farmers recently attended a spring series of field days and workshops promoting pasture management for weed control.

“The more competitive the pasture the lower the weed burden in the long run,” said Industry & Investment (I&I) NSW fireweed project officer, Craig Muir.

I&I beef livestock officer, Ian Blackwood, said improved pasture paid for itself.

“With low producing pastures your options for beef enterprises are limited and you will always be a price taker,” Mr Blackwood told 130 participants at one event at Tocal, staged as part of the NSW Fireweed Initiative.

“By improving only 20 per cent of your land to ryegrass and white clover, the best winter competitors against fireweed, you can not only double your gross margin, but your options for fattening stock are far greater, and this sets you up for further pasture improvement.”

Landholders discussed interim results from herbicide trials on fireweed, and while some mixes worked better than others, the main message was clear – “herbicides are only the first step to improving or maintaining your pastures, and shouldn’t be relied on long-term”.

Mr Muir said Bromoxynil based products consistently provide superior control when used during winter.

“Regardless of what product you use, it’s extremely important to get the timing right, since the earlier you spray the better the kill of fireweed and this allows for greater seasonal pasture production,” he said.

As part of the day, Tocal district agronomist, Neil Griffiths, showed farmers how a run-down pasture paddock could be improved in a short time by the application of lime, poultry litter and adjustments to grazing management.

Further down the coast, 75 farmers from Berry and Milton discussed fireweed and giant Parramatta grass management at two workshops organised through the Southern Councils Group [Small Farms Network](#).

“Control of fireweed with sheep and goats was hotly discussed at the workshops – many landholders were pleased with the results they had seen on their own and others’ properties,” Mr Muir said.

Further reading

[Weed profile: Fireweed](#)

[Weed control in pastures and lucerne](#)

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