VICTORIAN GORSE TASKFORCE

GORSE TALK

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Committee Update

Welcome to issue 10 of Gorse Talk.

The gorse hasn't stopped so neither have we.

The last half year has seen new collaborations and partnerships developing with stakeholders, a new VGT commercial being produced, a community demonstration day held in Chewton, and gorse warrior heroes aplenty. Our energetic Communications and Engagement Officer Christina Boon got out into communities attending Elmore Field days, Sheepvention, Talbot farmers Market and the Beaufort Agriculture show, helping over 327 landholders with their gorse questions.

Our AGM for 2022/23 was held late in November where we welcomed three new committee members: Peter Sporle, Alan Denehey and Nikolas Moll. All are adamant Gorse Warriors and come from a background in Landcare and Natural resource management. Peter has been heavily involved in the Gorse Greif project at Pipers Creek and Kyneton, Alan has gained great experience working in the North Central Catchment Management Authority and Nikolas is Landcare facilitator for the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group that has a focus on controlling gorse in the region. The VGT are excited to work and collaborate with its new members.

We are honoured that we are retaining much of our wonderful committee members, with the exception of Justin Rowe, Mathew Menhennet and Dale Tunstall who have moved on due to busy schedules and to focus on other commitments.

There is a lot more in this edition of Gorse Talk, so we hope you enjoy it. If your community have any gorse events or activities coming up, get in contact with the VGT, we will do our best to spread the word.

VGT collaborates with Melbourne Water

Waterways are one of the major sources of gorse seed spread, making its presence alongside a watercourse a priority to control. I'd assume most reading this know what gorse is, but there are also many who do not.

The VGT and Melbourne Water (MW) combined forces to provide information on the effects of gorse on waterways and to promote Melbourne Water's Liveable Communities Liveable Waterways (LCLW) program.

The LCLW program funds projects that focus on protecting waterways, on creating green open spaces and supporting MW strategies in their operating area (Previously Port Phillip and Westernport CMAs).

Have you seen gorse along a waterway?

Gorse is a serious threat to our waterway health

Introduced from western Europe, gorse is an incredibly prickly, dense, evergreen legume which can grow up to 4m high and 3m diameter.

Waterways are a main source of gorse seed spread, with gorse upstream impacting on clean properties downstream.

- **Gorse greatly hinders access to waterways and recreational areas.**
- **Gorse can outcompete and exclude all other native plants.**
- **Gorse undermines connected habitats.**
- **Gorse reduces open spaces and productive grazing land.**
- **Gorse impacts on natural aesthetics of a waterway.**
- **Gorse is a significant haven for feral animals which bring further impacts.**

Now one of Australia's worst weeds, gorse is listed as a **Weed of National Significance** (WoNS) due to its invasiveness, impacts, potential for spread and negative effects on economic, environmental and social values.

Under the ***Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994***, both public and private landowners within the Melbourne Water operating area, being the Port Philip and Westernport region, are responsible for preventing the growth and spread of gorse on their land.

Waterways are a main source of gorse seed spread, with gorse upstream impacting on clean properties downstream.

Controlling gorse along a waterway

'Cut and Paint': A useful control method in sensitive areas to prevent off-target damage. Cut stems as low as possible and immediately smear the cut with a registered herbicide to prevent regrowth.

De-bulking: Plants can be brush-cut, lopped, slashed/mulched, or felled to reduce the bulk and increase access for follow up treatment or spraying when plants regrow to at least 40cm high.

Physical removal: Small plants can be hand-hoed or larger plants grubbed; keeping in mind that disturbances can cause rapid gorse regeneration and stream bank erosion.

Follow Up Control:

- Follow up control on resprouting gorse prior to it seeding, is key to preventing reinfestation.
- Follow up for at least two years before revegetating the land with grasses or shrubs.
- Optimum treatment can be all year round.

Use of chemicals

Victorian legislation controls the use of agricultural chemicals, and it is the user's responsibility to be familiar with this legislation. Some chemicals require the user to hold an **Agricultural Chemical Users Permit** (ACUP). Agriculture Victoria provides a guide to using agricultural chemicals in Victoria as well as a list of sensitive areas.

Note: **Choose only products registered for use in your situation and always read the label and follow the instructions carefully.**

More information

- **Reach out to your local Catchment Management Authority (CMA)** for assistance keeping our riparian land in good condition. If you are a private landholder in Melbourne Water's operating area, you can now apply for **project funding** under the **Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways program**.
  - If you are considering activities that improve waterway health or biodiversity, preference is given to projects that fall within the priority areas shown on Melbourne Water's interactive map. You can apply for a combination of activities on the one application form.
  - More information on the **Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways program** and the online application form can be found here: Information for Private Landholders
- **Visit the** VGT website for additional control suggestions, information around planning and an integrated approach.
- **Weeds of National Significance - Gorse -** National Best Practice Manual 2006

Created by the Victorian Gorse Taskforce with support from Melbourne Water

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Our Communications and Community Engagement Officer out and about

Christina Boon with MP Martha Haylett at Beaufort Agricultural show

Our Communications and Community Engagement Officer, Christina Boon, has been spreading gorse messages and best practice advice far and wide over the last 6 months since our last Gorse Talk newsletter. You may have seen or heard her at:

- **The Talbot Farmers Market** – 18th June 2023
  - 36 gorse conversations.
- **Farms Advice Podcast with Jack Creswell** – 20th July 2023
  - A gorse episode produced on Australia's largest farming podcast. https://open.spotify.com/episode/5m0zDmsCglvmL7dl07B6Xa?si=ee5zzyt0S_-9nzrmOwoWnA
- **Sheepvention** – 6th and 7th August 2023
  - 62 gorse conversations.
  - Stall shared with the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP).
- **Gold FM** – 28th August 2023
  - Interviewed by Tayla Oates and broadcast over Central Victoria's radio station, Gold FM, every half hour with the news.

- **Chewton Gorse Demonstration Day** – 3rd September 2023
  - Supported by the Mount Alexander Shire.
  - 36 people from the region came to learn practical gorse control from the experts.

- **Elmore Field Days** – 3rd, 4th, and 5th October 2023
  - 140 gorse conversations.
  - The VGT shared a stall again with the VSTWP.

- **Beaufort Agricultural Show** – 19th November 2023
  - 53 gorse conversations (plus over 100 children interacted)

Christina with Bluey at Sheepvention

The 2022/23 Community Grants Program

The VGT supported sixteen groups as part of the 2022/2023 Community Grant Program. We were thrilled to see the achievements of each project. Some incredible, combined results include:

- **163 ha** of gorse controlled
- **46** landholders involved
- **42** three-year voluntary work agreements signed
- **$45,602** of VGT funding distributed
- **$180,000** approx. total program investment
- **Main control methods used** – mulching, foliar spraying, the Ecoblade, slashing, drone, herbicide application, cut and paint.

Mulching Gorse. Image by Chloe Smith Photography

New commercial coming soon

The VGT have been busy designing, filming and developing a new 30 second audio visual commercial, which will be coming to a screen near you in the new year.

The commercial, which has been on the cards for over a year, started coming to fruition in the latter half of this year by employing filmmaker **Micah Gregory** from Escapade Studios. Micah, having no prior experience with gorse, took on the task with energy and is producing a piece we are very proud of.

It couldn't have been produced without the help of a very generous Landowner, **Michaela** with a willingness to share her issue, **Nicole Garfi**; the VGT's Community and Pest Management Officer, and the volunteer work of VGT members **Ron Cosgrave** and **Christina Boon**.

- **The outcome is a very impressive and engaging commercial that we look forward to sharing with you and the rest of Victoria.**

Spotlight on:

Nicole Garfi

VGT Community Pest Management Officer

Nicole has been involved with the VGT for the last 9 years. Having worked prior on teams that fought weed infestations hands on, to working as an officer with DEECA, Nicole understands weed infestations well.

Let's learn a little more about Nicole:

What brought you to the position of Community Pest Management Officer for the VGT?

- I took on the role (then called the Executive Officer) back in 2014 as a secondment, at the time I was a biosecurity officer in the southwest region. I really enjoyed the diversity of the role and being able to help landholders who were searching for solutions to their gorse problems. When the position was advertised again, I jumped at it, that was in 2016.

What do you love most about the VGT?

- I love that the committee give me the freedom to explore some of my own ideas and I get to see some of them bought to life. I think the VGT are courageous in that they are always keen to listen and act on new ways that could help communities better manage gorse. Most of all, I love working with this committee, they are a great group of people that is very supportive and always appreciative of the work I do for them.

Why do you think gorse is so problematic for so many landholders?

- I think landholders don't realise how many and how long seeds will last for in the soil. I often talk to landholders who have tried to control gorse in the past thinking the job is done, till it all returns, sometimes worse than before. The number of seeds and their longevity needs to be really understood to control gorse effectively.

What is the best advice you can give someone with gorse?

- Follow up is the only way to get ahead of gorse. Every year like clockwork and before it goes to seed. It might not always seem like it, but you are winning against it.

What do you think the VGT greatest achievement is?

- That's hard to answer, I feel a great sense of achievement when I hear that we have helped a landholder turn their gorse situation around. Or when I have helped a landholder understand the right best practice methods for their situation. I also think the VGT has done an outstanding job in the communications space in recent years in building many resources, websites and social media platforms that bring important information to landholders and stakeholders affected by gorse.

If you want to listen to music, what music/artist do you play?

- This is hard because I'm fond of so many genres, but I am a sucker for 70's, 80's and 90's. I love to dance so most songs that I can sing and dance along to I'll listen to.

How will you celebrate Christmas this year?

- Waiting for Santa to come with my two daughters and celebrating a big Italian feast with my extended family.

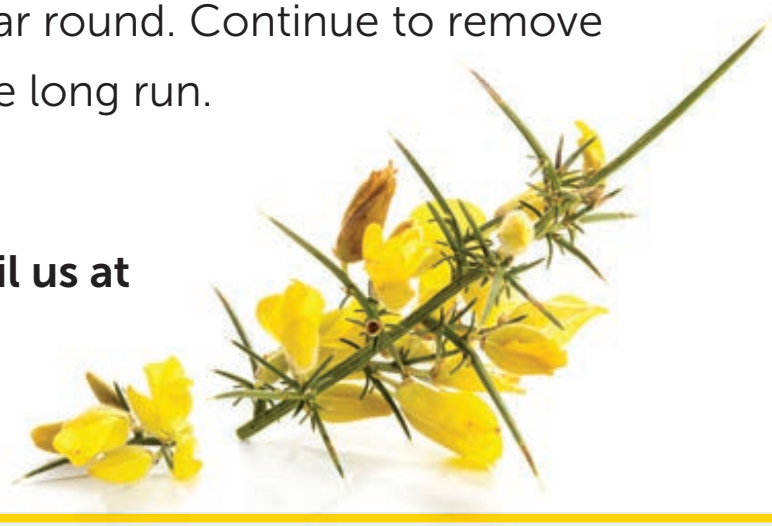
Gorse in summer

Gorse in seed.

You will likely hear the unnerving crackle of gorse seed pods bursting on a hot summers day if you walk past. Gorse in Victoria is seeding now.

Most of that seed (99%) will be found within 3 meters of the parent plant according to a case study presented to the 15th Australian Weed conference, Adelaide September 2006 (unless of course the parent is on a road or waterway, then expect to find it all the way along). Spraying can occur until mid-summer, especially after all the extended rains. While mulching can be done year round. Continue to remove isolated bushes to save you time in the long run.

Don't know where to start?
Head to the VGT website or email us at info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au



Chewton gorse control demonstration day

By Janene Schillier,

Gorse Warrior and Participant.

The Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) put on a terrific morning on Sunday 3 September 2023 for anyone interested in the ways to eradicate and control the invasive gorse bush (also known as Furze), *Ulex europaeus*, native to western Europe and introduced to Australia in the 1800's for fencing in stock.

There was a good roll up even though it happened to be Father's Day. Perhaps the delicious morning tea attracted the crowd too (it was fabulous). The information and demonstration scheduled between 9am and 11am began in the Chewton Senior Citizens Hall with a welcome and introduction by Christina Boon; Communications and Community Engagement Officer from the VGT.

The morning included video examples of gorse control, take away brochures "Best Practice" anything and everything was there to inspire and equip both novices and experienced gorse control enthusiasts. Some had relatively small areas to work on, while others had acres.

The gorse bush was present at the back of the venue reminding us of its pervasion of bushland (it is not particular about where it will explode it's seed in the hot months).

Chewton Demonstration Day

There was equipment on display like the '**Ecoblade**' technology brought in by **Mountain View Contracting**. Experts were there to show and tell and answer questions. A briefing on biological control by Environmental officer and VGT member, **Brian Bainbridge**. An expert spraying contractor: **Southern Ecosystems Management** explaining products and processes of spraying (also how to protect from any hazardous materials), and much input and assistance by **Matt McEachran**, the Natural Environment officer with the Mount Alexander Shire Council, to help landowners attack infestations.

What a fantastic morning. We all left inspired to attack this monster and educate others in the satisfying job of getting positive results. Thank you to Christina, the Victorian Gorse Taskforce team, the demonstrators, the Chewton Film Society the Chewton Bushlands Association and all those who made the morning such a success.

Keep up the good work!

By Gorse Warrior: Janene Schillier

The next Demonstration Day is currently planned for Pipers Creek in the Macedon Ranges Shire on the 24th March.

If you see a need to hold a community demonstration day in your community, please be in contact.
Email: info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

Surfcoast Angair Wildflower and Art Weekend

By Pete Forster, VGT Committee member and Gorse Warrior

Peter Forster educating around weeds at the AngAir Wildflowers Show recently

Our very own Gorse Warrior, Peter Forster, has been spreading helpful advice about gorse and other weeds at the annual wildflower show at Anglesea in September:

Angair is a long-standing conservation organisation founded in 1969 and based on the townships of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet. Its prime objective is protection of the extensive areas of biodiverse heathlands surrounding the two towns. A feature of the show is the weed stand which has samples of an array of environmental weeds threatening the heathlands, many of them garden escapees. This year gorse was highlighted as a weed of concern.

Whilst gorse is not a major concern in the Great Otway National Park and other crown land bush areas it is a major issue in surrounding farmland, waterways, some roadsides and rural residential areas in the Surf Coast region.

Angair volunteers have removed gorse from the northern edge of Gherang Gherang reserve on Forest Road and our President Sally White is controlling and monitoring gorse infestations near Bells Beach. When Christine and I first arrived in Anglesea, I removed several gorse bushes in Betleigh Street.

It is a short drive north from Anglesea to the first serious gorse infestation areas which occur from the Bellbrae roundabout to Freshwater creek on the Anglesea Geelong Road. Angair has worked nearby with Regional Roads Victoria (joint working bees) on controlling Cape Broom, Boneseed and other weeds on the Great Ocean Road.

"One issue I see as recurring in roadside weed control is the lack of follow up monitoring and spraying by the appropriate land managers to kill new gorse seedlings before they flower and seed. This is currently the case on the Anglesea Road north of Bellbrae."

The annual wildflower show is a two-day event with many other environmental organisations invited to participate. For example, Parks Vic also featured environmental weeds of concern that they must deal with on Parks controlled land (including boneseed, blue bell creeper, sweet pittosporum and sallow wattle). Angair volunteers work with Parks Vic staff in a co-ordinated attack on a range of weeds with activities three Monday mornings a month.

Angair also works with the Surf Coast Shire and the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority on their reserve areas. The Surf Coast Shire has a Weeds of the Surf Coast Shire brochure which includes gorse and a suggested indigenous planting garden list which we hand out on the weed stand. They also have a Pest Plant and Animal Management Strategy for the Shire. The Surf Coast Shire vision is for all landholders to work effectively together to eradicate or control pest plants and animals.

New volunteers are always welcome at Angair and the working bee finishes with morning tea and a chat at the Angair office in the Anglesea Community Precinct.

To find out more: https://angair.org.au/

Funny gorse photos!

"Is gorse taking over your property?"

Our CPMO, **Nicole Garfi**, snapped this pic in the Tamar Valley recently on a little holiday. Citing: you can never really turn work off on a holiday.

"What a tough cookie"

Paul Damischino from Mountain View Contracting was recently contracted to combat gorse near Kyneton when he saw this survivor. The 'Ecoblade' technology he was using was genuinely outsmarted by this gorse!

"What a lovely view"

Our VGT member **Lisette Mill** caught this holiday snap in Lyttleton, New Zealand recently. It may look like a stunning mountain scene... it is, but there would be no lovely mountain strolls occurring there, the yellow is gorse running

rampant!

If you have a photo of gorse showing the lighter side of life, be sure to share.

Email: info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

Gorse Warrior story

Peter McGain

Peter McGain revealed to us that he had been dealing with a large infestation of gorse in the Freshwater Creek area. We were curious to hear his story. Peter mentioned that this site had its gorse removed 20 years earlier, but no follow up occurred so it was back to square one for the landowners. Wanting to farm the land, they started control again this year.

Note: disturbing the soil can come with other pitfalls, not to mention stimulating the seedbank, but it can also be used to an advantage as a part of an integrated strategy.

Peter's gorse story:

"We commenced in February 2023 by using an excavator to rip the gorse, with roots, out of the ground. We created heaps about 1.5m high, let them dry in Autumn, then set fire to them in late April. We then went over the ground and flattened it using a 110 Horsepower John Deer tractor with speed disks on the back. We then used a backpack spray in late September 2023 to eliminate regrowth.

Future works: Autumn 2024. Hand or boom spray regrowth, burn if

necessary. Repeat every spring and autumn as required".

Burning Gorse at Freshwater creek

Working Hard

Graded paddock after primary control at Freshwater Creek

It can be remarkable when a large infestation of this dreaded weed is slayed, gaining an upper hand on gorse is satisfying. There is no right way, or a one size fits all approach, just different ways. All having the common denominator of following up after the main knock down, especially in the first few years.

Thank you, Peter, for sharing your story.

Dabber bottle giveaway – That's a wrap

To help landholders make a start on their gorse control and to provide a tool that is perfect for follow up walks, the VGT had a dabber applicator bottle giveaway.

Dabber bottle

The dabber applicator bottle we love to use ourselves for the 'cut and paint' gorse control method because it is effective, satisfying and prevents off target damage. A useful control method on fence lines, isolated plants, outlying edges of large infestations and in sensitive areas.

As you may know, small, isolated gorse plants can quickly become a long-term problem if you don't catch them before seeding. A dabber applicator, ready to go with your secateurs in your pocket, can make catching woody weeds like gorse, when you spot them, a whole lot easier.

Dabber bottles ready to post

The offer uptake was steady, then appreciative emails flowed back and we felt chuffed that we could provide a handy little tool that isn't always easy to get your hands on.

Thank you to all who took up the offer, we appreciate that you that you made the step and decided to give it a go. Good luck with your gorse control, we really are barracking on your team!

VGT Resources

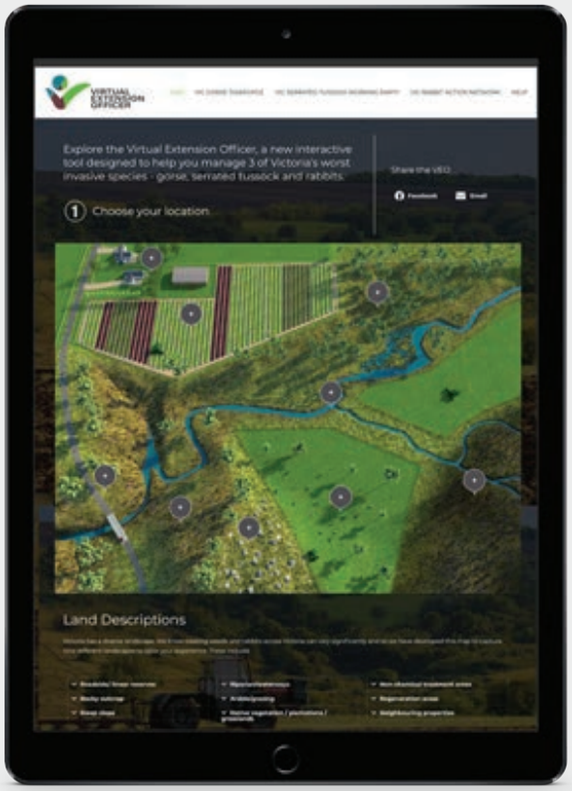
Do not miss our giveaways and updates

Follow VGT on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date:

www.facebook.com/VictorianGorseTaskforce

www.instagram.com/victorian_gorse_taskforce/

Have you seen the Virtual Extension Officer website?



The VEO is a free online resource for landholders effected by gorse, serrated tussock and rabbits.

The VEO was developed to enable landholders battling one of these species, to replicate their individual situation online and gather tailored information in the one location.

The VEO also interacts with the VGT, Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and Victorian Rabbit Action Network websites and is compatible with most smart devices.

Check it out and share it with your network and community. Visit https://vicgorsetaskforce.com.au/learning-hub/

The VGT Learning Hub

Looking for gorse information? The Learning Hub page on the VGT website is a great place to start.

We have some great videos on gorse science, gorse impacts and control demonstrations. Plus, some great written resources and fact sheets to ensure you have all the information you need to tackle your gorse. We hope these resources assist you and your communities to effectively control gorse.

Check it out today and share it with your networks.
Visit https://vicgorsetaskforce.com.au/learning-hub/

Other Community Pest Management Groups News

Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working party has good news! Serrated Tussock has been eradicated from 13 satellite infestations.

It is not often we can deliver good news about one of the country's most invasive plants, serrated tussock, but we recently received an update from Agriculture Victoria that contained some great news for landowners and the community. Agriculture Victoria, a state government agency that sits within the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), have successfully eradicated 13 isolated (satellite) infestations of serrated tussock since 2019 in the Port Phillip and Westernport catchment.

Ivan Carter with the VSTWP, Ian Browning, long standing Biosecurity officer with DEECA and Christina Boon with VGT at the Elmore field days 2023

These 13 infestations now have ten years of absence, where an extensive eradication inspection of the properties and surrounding areas has confirmed that the serrated tussock has been eradicated. Agriculture Victoria manage a total of 76 satellite infestations of serrated tussock across the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment, with the 13 eradicated infestations equating to 17% of the total satellite infestations, an impressive figure.

Victorian Blackberry Taskforce update

The VBT has an event coming up in March next year:

Invasive Species Forum

Date: Friday 15 March 2024
Location: Melbourne Museum - Tree Tops Venue

Presenters from Melbourne University, Deakin University, Curtin University and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The day will focus on scientific research into controlling invasive plants and animals.

For more information contact Barton Roberts from the VBT on 0409 332 258 or email info@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

Victorian Rabbit Action Network update

Breeding Like Rabbits

Have you noticed the last three wet years has meant an explosion in rabbit populations across Victoria?

Are you getting ready to implement your community or property rabbit baiting program?

Here are seven things to consider when doing a baiting program:

- Work with your neighbours
- Undertake your monitoring to find rabbit feeding zones
- Bait when alternate foods are scarce, late Summer
- Use good quality bait that is fresh
- Place trails/bait where rabbits will encounter it
- Pre-feed to ensure good uptake by rabbits
- Lay bait late afternoon / early evening

- **For more information watch the VRAN video where mentors explain best practice baiting techniques:** https://vran.com.au/vran-resources/best-practice-rabbit-management-step-1-baiting/

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Contact the VGT

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www.vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

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