Economic impacts of lantana on the Australian grazing sector

The economic impact of lantana on the Australian grazing industry was assessed in a study commissioned by Biosecurity Queensland and the Lantana WoNS Group.

Results, based on survey responses from more than 380 land managers from throughout Queensland and New South Wales, indicate that lantana is having a serious economic impact on the Australian grazing sector.

It is estimated that lantana currently costs the Australian grazing industry (05/06 values):

- $104.3 million in lost production
    - $70.8 million in Queensland
    - $33.4 million in New South Wales
- $17.1 million in current control costs; and
- The mere presence of lantana causes a drop in property value.

These impacts have an estimated flow on cost to the Australian Economy of:

- $82.8 million in gross output
- $42.0 million in value added (GDP)
- $13.1 million in wages and salaries
- 744 full time equivalent positions.

The report also suggests that if lantana control efforts are ceased and lantana is allowed to reach its full potential distribution (based on CLIMEX modeling); the cost to the grazing sector will be in the vicinity of $1.2 to $2.4 billion per year.

Interestingly, the survey indicated that many landholders view the economic impact of lantana as insignificant and are unaware of the true implications for property production and management costs. Instead they listed the most significant negative impacts of lantana as:

- Removal and/or replacement of native vegetation;
- Reduction of the conservation value of the land
- Reduction in scenic amenity of the land
- Restriction of the movements of animals/humans
- Provision of harbour for feral animals
- Increased management stress
- Restriction of property access
- Increased risk of fire
- Displacement of native animals
- Negative impacts on tourism.

Other findings indicated that current control efforts on infestations of light/medium density usually result in a reduction of its area; as compared with efforts to manage heavy or dense infestations that have been shown to slow the expansion, but not reduce infestation size.

According to integrated control researchers linked to the Lantana WoNS program, this indicates that many of the management techniques currently being employed do not represent best practice and are economical in the long tem. A Best Practice Manual and Decision Support Tool are currently being developed to provide better guidance on the integration of control techniques.

While best practice management techniques often require significant initial investment, the long-term benefits frequently outweigh those of management methods that require on-going investment just to maintain status quo.

For further information, please download the full report: *"Economic Impact of Lantana on the Australian Grazing Industry"* from the resources section of the www.weeds.org.au/WoNS.lantana webpage.