Act quickly to control Loosestrife or Lippia

Weed seeds can come onto the farm through a variety of vectors; floodwaters, blown in through fencelines or even a willy-willy passing over paddocks, wild animals or livestock, vehicle tyres, machinery or bouncing off a ute tray.

Weeds are always opportunists, looking for unused soil moisture or soil nutrients.

**Loosestrife** (*Lythrum hyssopifolia*), common names Hyssop or Lesser Loosestrife is an upright, hard stemmed herb, presumed native and similar to rosemary in appearance, which grows to 40cm in height and has tiny pink flowers.

Loosestrife has responded to the excess soil moisture in spring and has shot away now. Loosestrife is problematic, as its toxic nature poses an issue for livestock producers.

Disease caused from grazing this plant is often fatal, thus producers need to be very cautious.

District Veterinarian with Riverina Local Land Services, Tim Biffin advises producers to be wary when loosestrife is present.

Cattle are more susceptible to the plant's toxicity than sheep. For this reason, if you cannot avoid grazing the loosestrife, sheep should be used over cattle, but monitored very closely for the period of grazing the weed.

Because the loosestrife plants contain a kidney toxin, the animals need access to plentiful and good quality water to help compensate for any sub-clinical disease.

Once the plant is dead from spraying, the risk of toxicity seems to reduce somewhat. It is unknown whether this is due to a reduction in toxicity of the plant or if livestock preferentially graze other feed after the loosestrife has been sprayed.

Whether you are trying to preserve soil moisture or protect livestock health, there are a number of herbicide options to consider. Remember that loosestrife is easier and cheaper to kill at the seedling stage than waiting until the plant is mature.

The threat to livestock health is greater when the weed is the only green feed on offer and this threat will lessen, once the herbicide has killed the plant.

When stock are at threat then consider a herbicide which will take a few days to brown out, rather than a slower acting choice which could take at least two weeks before dessication.

Always consider the right herbicide choice or mixture to achieve weed control of loosestrife and respect any with-holding periods for livestock grazing on the sprayed paddock.

**Lippia identified in southern NSW**

**Lippia** (*Phyla canescens*) is an environmental and pastoral exotic weed of inland river systems that is increasing as a threat to agriculture.

Lippia is a stealthy perennial plant that functions as a groundcover after soil has been inundated, competing with other more useful pasture plants.
Lippia is not palatable to livestock and due to its prostrate nature, is not tall enough to be a useful feed for cattle, even if it tasted better than it does.

Lippia has been a weed of notoriety in northern NSW and unfortunately it is creeping into the river and creek system of the Riverina and MIA, being carried down by flood waters.

Bare ground situations without competition is always ideal for any weed and is similar to leaving the front door open for a thief. I do think of weeds as thieves, robbing the ground of valuable moisture and offering little useful feed for livestock and impacting on production.

I regard an environmental weed such as lippia as increasing the overheads of your farm. It is a fierce competitor with other more useful pasture species and lippia’s impact on farm production levels cannot be ignored when it out-competes annual pasture species.

There are herbicide options for lippia. Be confident the weed is correctly identified and use the label rate as per instructions to achieve efficacy.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries Noxious and environmental weed control handbook (found at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au under Weeds, outlines the herbicide options:

Active constituent-Dichlorprop at 600g/L e.g. Lantana 600® with a broadacre rate of 5.0L/ha with a minimum application rate of 100L spray solution/ha. The best results are obtained when spraying at flowering and with very good soil moisture.

Under Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority Permit 14197, to control lippia in pasture and fallow situations, the active constituent of 2,4-D amine at 625 g/L e.g. Amicide® 625 can be used for control at a rate of 1.7-3.1 L/ha plus 1% crop oil in a pastoral land situation, applied to lippia in a fresh condition, mid-flower and with good soil moisture present.

Because lippia is a perennial with a deep root system, it stays fresh or regrows using subsoil moisture.

With lippia, a follow up spray if required. This double knock is very important with this weed species before encouraging competition from other more useful pasture or crop plants.

Other non-chemical options for lippia control include pasture improvement and grazing management. Pasture improvement options need to be well-suited to the soil type, climate and time of sowing. A perennial species will need to be considered in the pasture mix to compete with the deep-rooted (0-80cm) lippia.

Because lippia is carried in by water and then establishes itself after a period of the soil being inundated i.e. severe waterlogging or flood, the pasture improvement options also need to consider species that are well suited to waterlogging.

Pasture options that are more tolerant of waterlogging events include Balansa clover (also mildly tolerant of salt), Persian clover, Gland clover, Burr medic, Strawberry clover, and the Sub clover cultivars of the Yanninicum type; for example Riverina and Napier. The temperate grass fescue can tolerate short periods of flooding (days rather than weeks).

Phalaris (Phalaris aquatica) is a perennial grass more tolerant of flooding events while the pros and cons of establishing phalaris is another topic. Personally I believe that while phalaris is a slow seedling to establish and paddock preparation essential, it can be a very hardy grass that performs best in a fertile situation (with
The penalties of a wet season – weeds of interest

a legume and some pasture fertiliser) where it is not allowed to become too rank in late spring. I would rather manage a paddock of phalaris that can sustain livestock than the weed lippia on any given day.