

Media release

Thursday, 1 October 2020

For immediate release

First ever outbreak of new prohibited matter species discovered in Northern Rivers region

Rous County Council (RCC) Weed Biosecurity Officers have uncovered an outbreak of Parthenium weed on a rural property in Tweed Shire for the first time in history for this region.

Parthenium weed (*Parthenium hysterophorus*), a native of the Caribbean region, is both highly invasive to the natural and agricultural environment and is known to cause severe health reactions in humans and livestock.

The source of infestation is suspected to have come from a contaminated batch of chook feed. The discovery was made when RCC Weed Biosecurity Officers were conducting targeted extension work on properties in the area identified as high risk of Parthenium weed incursion.

Once the property owner was made aware of Parthenium, it was reported immediately. Weed Biosecurity Officers were then able to access the outbreak area, correctly identify the weed and immediately roll out a rapid response plan which entailed manually removing all flowering plants and treating any seedlings.

Weed Biosecurity and Bush Regeneration Manager, Rhett Patrick said, 'We appreciate how cooperative the landowner has been and urge others to jump on the Rous website and look up how to identify and report prohibited matter species like Parthenium.'

Parthenium is endemic in parts of central Queensland and is slowly spreading to southern parts of Queensland. However, until now it has never been reported in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, making it a significant biosecurity risk. Small outbreaks have occurred in other parts of the state, mainly from contaminated fodder and machinery.

"We are lucky to catch this outbreak when we did as it spreads rapidly in these conditions," Mr Patrick commented. "Ecoclimatic index modelling published in the New South Wales Parthenium Strategy shows that this region is highly vulnerable to Parthenium weed incursions. Without the assistance of landholders to help identify outbreaks, it is only a matter of time before this situation happens again".

If found, immediately report to:

1. Rous County Council (RCC): 02 6623 3800 or council@rous.nsw.gov.au
2. RCC 'Report a weed' : rous.nsw.gov.au/reportaweed
3. DPI Weed Helpline: 1800 680 244 or weeds@dpi.nsw.gov.au

IMPORTANT As Parthenium plants, flowers, seeds and pollen are known to cause respiratory and other health issues, it is advised you exercise extreme caution if you suspect it is growing on your property. Report immediately, move all livestock away from that area and do not attempt to remove any plants yourself.

More info: rous.nsw.gov.au/weeds