



BLACKWOOD BIOSECURITY

Land Lifestyle Livelihood

FEBRUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

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- Highlight of the month
- Our Work In The Field
- Our Special Programme
- Our Upcoming Events
- News and Information

Highlight of the month! Pig virus fatal to humans!

This month and along with WA's other thirteen Biosecurity Groups, our Executive Officer Trish McCourt and Operations Manager Jason Dearle, attended the annual **Recognised Biosecurity Group (RBG) forum** in Perth.

The purpose of the forum was to provide a professional development opportunity for RBG committee volunteers and employees, identify priorities, challenges and solutions in pest management and gain knowledge of new pest management techniques and research in the field.

Some highlights of the event:

- Dr Abbey Potter from the Dept of Health addressed the forum on her research on the **Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV). The virus that is fatal to humans**, is spread through bites from mosquitos, which become infected through biting infected pigs and waterbirds. This is one of the many reasons why we are keen to cull the pig population in our region. BBI will be supporting the Department to monitor JEV in our area. We will do this by taking blood samples from deceased pigs in our region.
- Jason Dearle 'Piggy Backed' the Departments information by presenting on Feral Pig Management
- Dr Susan Campbell from The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development presented a paper on Rabbit Control. Yes – our much-loved subject!! Susan reports that whilst Biocontrols such as calicivirus (K5) can be effective, landholders have a huge part to play. This includes properly and responsibly attending to pre-feeding activities prior to the K5 release on their property. She also reports that we should not only rely on K5 to reduce rabbit numbers to levels that do not pose a risk. Several tools must be used with special focus on destructing rabbit warrens.

Other presentations included an address from Jackie Jarvis - Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry, Small Business, and Heather Brayford – Director General DPIRD.



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Our Work in the Field



Our Operations team have been busy assisting landholders with blackberries this month as well as tending to Cotton bush within the region. Landholders have been notifying us of any cotton bush sightings. If you think you have seen any declared weeds including Cotton bush and blackberry in your area, please give us a call on 0455 522 750. You could also send us an email with a photo on admin@bbisouthwest.org.au.

A snapshot of our work in the field between 20th December 2023 through to 21st February 2024.

- 628 K5 releases
- 199 property visits regarding rabbits
- 15 property visits regarding foxes
- 3 regarding cotton bush
- 4 relating to special permits
- 11 regarding blackberry



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Our Special Programme

As a means to control the rabbit population in Australia, RHDV (Rabbit Calicivirus) or K5 was introduced in 1996.

This virus affects only rabbits and is not transmissible to any other animal or plant.



Our Calicivirus summer release programme has had mixed results. Some areas have reported a significant reduction, whilst others have reported no change and even some reporting an increase. But, we have to keep soldiering on, so we will be doing an Autumn release. However, there are very limited vials for this upcoming release, so we want participating landholders to be committed to the cause, ensuring that they attend to their pre-feeding responsibilities with vigour.

Due to high demand and limited stock, it will be first in best dressed and offered free to landholders within our catchment area; Shire of Bridgetown - Greenbushes, Boyup Brook, West Arthur and lower parts of Donnybrook - Balingup.

Pop into our office at 104 Hampton Street, Bridgetown, phone 0455 522 750 or email admin@bbisouthwest.org.au to be added to the register. Once on the register, we will contact you in due course about pre-feeding the rabbits and the K5 release process.

The rabbit problem in Australia has encouraged Rabbit Free Australia to consider a case to engage a National Rabbit Management Coordinator to oversee the situation. You can visit <https://rabbitfreeaustralia.org.au> for more details.

Our Upcoming Events

West Arthur Fox Shoot Breakfast - Sunday 17th March 2024

Blackwood Biosecurity will be hosting a breakfast at the West Arthur Fox Shoot on the last day of the event, Sunday 17th of March at 7.30 am.

The breakfast will be held at the Darkan Rifle Club. For any enquiries, please contact Graeme Peirce on either 0419 765 196 or graemepeirce@yahoo.com.au



Balingup Small Farm Field Day - Saturday 6th April 2024

Blackwood Biosecurity will be participating with a stall to provide information on declared pest management to the local community. Pop over to have a chat on the day and attend our 'Bunny Igloo' making demonstration.



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News and Information

Backyard Buddies: That's so weird



Witches' broom on *Jacksonia* causing red deformed growths, fasciation on *Templetonia*, chimera on orange rind, and phyllody on strawberry.

Plant abnormalities have intrigued gardeners and botanists alike for many years. These abnormalities sometime result in strange growths or odd variations. Causes include environmental or genetic factors, pests, and disease. Below are some common examples, and perhaps you've noticed one or two of these before?

Witches' broom

Witches' broom is a symptom of stress in woody plants resulting in a deformed mass of twigs and branches, which looks broom-like in appearance. Causes include insect pests, viruses, fungi, environmental factors and genetic mutations.

Fasciation

Fasciation appears as abnormal flattened, ribbon-like, crested or elaborately contorted stems or leaves. Causes include hormonal, genetic, bacterial, fungal, viral and environmental.

Chimera

Chimera is the result of a genetic mutation. The overall appearance of fruit can be changed and sections of the rind or skin can appear striped and/or green. This is often reported in citrus where the rind colour is perfectly split between yellow and orange. Chimera leaf mutations produce variegated, misshapen, or completely white leaves. These mutations may be prized and propagated to create new varieties.

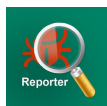
Phyllody

Phyllody is the abnormal development of the leaf tissue caused by viral infections or environmental factors resulting in an imbalance of the plant hormones. It makes leaves grow in strange places.

Is control or reporting necessary?

Not much can be done to prevent these oddities. Keep plants as healthy as possible to allow them to fight off pests and diseases as best they can. These weird and sometimes wonderful malformations can be a great talking point, but if you don't want them on your plants, consider removing the affected parts. Remember to disinfect gardening equipment before and after, to avoid spreading pests and diseases.

We would love to see photos of any weird or wonderful plant growths or variations. Take photos, tell us what you've found and on what plant. Photos can be submitted to MyPestGuide or the Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS).



Report a pest today!

MyPestGuide® was developed to encourage everyone (public, industry and government) to report observations of any common, interesting or possibly exotic pests, as well as the absence of pests across Australia.