

THE ECOLOGY AND CONTROL OF FIREWEED

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Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*) originates in south-eastern Africa and Madagascar and was first collected in Australia in 1918 in the Hunter Valley. It continues to spread into new areas, particularly along the south coast of New South Wales.

Research in the Department of Agronomy and Horticultural Science, University of Sydney, aims to investigate the ecology of fireweed, assess its impact on pasture production and develop acceptable methods of control, particularly involving the use of competitive pasture species.

To assist in this research a questionnaire, designed to determine the importance of fireweed in different situations and the effectiveness of various control methods, was mailed to 780 dairy farmers and graziers along the coast of New South Wales. A summary of the results of the survey are given in the poster. The large response to the questionnaire (74%) indicates the concern that farmers have regarding this weed. Other notable results were that fireweed was present on over 90% of the respondents' properties. Of those,

- (i) less than 10% considered it to be under control
- (ii) over 50% observed that it had arrived within the last 10 years
- (iii) 80% considered it a problem
- (iv) 8% believed that it had been or was causing poisoning or poor growth
- (v) over 50% considered fireweed their worst weed
- (vi) over 80% attempt to control it

Several pasture species, most commonly kikuyu, are suggested as having potential for control.