

Beechwood Biological Solutions Newsletter

ISSUE February 2017

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Parra Trooper featured in the Land

In the news again – we are featured in last week's edition of The Land

Last week's edition of The Land features Parra Trooper. Well, we're "featured" on page 33, 2nd February 2017. Follow this link to view the article: [The Land Article](#). [or see below] There are quite a few images in the online article that you won't have seen in the newspaper.



Jamie Brown from The Land newspaper interviewing Jeremy at the kitchen table.

Jeremy has been out in paddocks with NSW DPI's David Officer looking at the results of trials in northern NSW. The hot dry weather in coastal NSW hasn't been ideal for fungal growth but *Nigrospora oryzae* has been found in all of the samples taken from pastures inoculated with Parra Trooper. Jeremy will be back in the Casino area on March 9th for a field day with Norco. On March 2nd, we will be at Nambucca RSL for Nambucca Shire Council's weeds forum.

Trials have commenced in Queensland with the Parra Trooper strain cultivated from Giant Rats Tail grass and we're looking forward to hearing about the results. Much of coastal and subcoastal Queensland is experiencing a green drought right now, so we're hoping for widespread rain on the east coast. If you're interested in the Rats Tail product, [email us](#) or leave us a note in the "comments" field of the [online shop](#) and we'll contact you. You can also call us on 0448 562 024.

In the excitement about crown rot in weedy *Sporobolus* grasses, it is important not to lose sight of the most effective strategies we can employ against the spread of weeds. Managing the spread of seed by limiting vehicle and animal movements, quarantining new stock and avoiding overgrazing remain our most important tactics.

Our website has a number of [links](#) to useful information on weeds and pasture management.



Out in the field at a highly successful site with David Officer from NSW DPI, Bruce Lyle from Norco Rural, Nevile Creighton and Jeremy Bradley, Casino, northern NSW.

Organic tool to fight foreign weed

Jamie Brown - 6 Feb 2017, THE LAND

Thanks to the determination of a couple from the Hastings Valley, there's an organic alternative that targets introduced Parramatta grass with a native fungi – *Nigrospora oryzae* – which remains in the soil forever after.

When it's not diminishing the roots of this weedy grass it is working quite well with the other squillion fungi types already in the soil to break down mulch into usable nutrients.

Hastings Valley innovators Jeremy Bradley and Cathy Eggert took research by David Officer of the NSW Department of Primary Industries and commercialised it using farmers' nose and a great deal of passion to produce bags of concentrated *Nigrospora* which, when mixed with water and sprayed on paddocks, colonises the crown of that grass species only and turns its stalks a sickly orange.

It takes time and at first the results can be subtle – nothing like a squirt of chemical which kills everything. Fungi must first breed up and dry periods, like the one currently being experienced along the coast, makes it more difficult to 'get going'. But Mr Bradley has photographic proof that the fungi remains established, continuing to nip at the heels of this difficult weed until wet conditions allow it to dispense with it entirely.

Rain, tyres and animal hooves all help with dispersal. An estimation of spread from just one infected plant is about half a hectare in four years and the fungi will keep growing. The fungi may play a role in controlling Giant's Rat Tail too and trials are underway on the Atherton Tablelands, and in the Burdekin and Fitzroy basins.

The couple say they grew their passion for fungi by initially experimenting with carbon sequestration and sustainable soil management. Mr Bradley has twice received Australian Government Landcare awards for innovations in sustainable agriculture.

"We learnt the importance of fungi in soil – that they turn detritus into stable carbon. In fact fungi are the main pathway to sequestering soil carbon," Mr Bradley said.

Years later and after a personal investment of \$150,000, they were able to make *Nigrospora* available to consumers for farm scale regeneration of their paddocks. Today they operate out of a clinically clean chamber on their farm at Beechwood via Wauchope, breeding *Nigrospora* on sterile organic biomass, sending the living organisms to customers in easy to use bags under the Parra



Jeremy Bradley in a paddock full of Giant Parramatta Grass where fungi is doing work as a weed killer. Mr Bradley has twice received Australian Government Landcare awards for innovations in sustainable agriculture.

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Trooper label.

“Now we consider Parra Trooper as just another farm product,” Mr Bradley says. “But we have been on a steep learning curve getting here.”

Key to their marketing campaign has been the promotion of fungi as good citizens of soil.

Managing a difficult immigrant

This is the time of year when graziers in the sub tropics try to limit the spread of Giant Parramatta grass, whose tough leaves will not be tolerated by cattle.

The tropical Asian native, *Sporobolus fertilis*, is actually capable of producing 85,000 seeds per square metre and if left unchecked can quickly establish dominance in the paddock.

Landowners – by law – must do something about it. In the Bega Valley, at the limit of its southern distribution, it must be destroyed. On the mid North Coast the Noxious Weeds Order tolerates suppression.

Chemicals are the tried and true tool in the fight against this weed but come with substantial withholding periods after using Flupropanate (14 days for grazing, 120 days for feed crops) but less so with 2,2-DPA 740 (two days) and nil for glyphosate.

These chemical groups come with a warning for moderate resistance risk which means their effectiveness will not last forever. And the US refuses to recognise Flupropanate.

Of course there's grazing management techniques that can discourage the formation of bare soil patches – which *Sporobolus* love to colonise. Keeping paddocks appropriately stocked and managing grass growth using cell grazing is key in that equation.

More information: <http://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/5>