



# Inverell Shire Council

**NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL UNIT**

Please address all correspondence to the General Manager, Inverell Shire Council,

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## Common Prickly Pear

"Common pest pear" or "prickly pear" (*Opuntia stricta* and sub species) was the variety of pear that caused such widespread devastation in eastern Australia during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Originally imported from the Americas during the early 1800s, prickly pear was widely promoted and grown as a source of stock fodder during periods of drought. It didn't take long for prickly pear to become established over large areas of New South Wales and Queensland. The perfect climate and lack of natural enemies accounted for its amazing spread - still considered by many experts to be one of the botanical wonders of the world.

*Common pest pear is still present throughout New South Wales. In most areas, biological control agents (cactoblastis and cochineal) generally keep this pest under control - especially with a little bit of help from the land holder...*



### IDENTIFICATION

Common pest pear is a flat-leaved cactus plant, usually around 60 cm high but up to 1 metre. The leaves, or pads, grow to about 250mm by 200mm. Flowers are yellow, the prolific fruit purple when ripe. Birds, foxes and pigs eat the fruit and spread seed over large areas. New plants grow from seed or from pieces of the plant. The two main growing periods for the plant are in February and October each year.



### THE PROBLEM

Common pest pear is an invasive plant. It spreads quickly if not controlled and can completely take over a paddock. The plant is "armed" with two sets of thorns: the 25mm ones are very sharp, but they aren't really significant. The clusters of small, golden thorns are the ones that cause the problem. The pattern on the leaf ) marks the clusters of thorns.

These tiny thorns penetrate tongues and mouths of animals tempted to eat the plant, as cattle and sheep often do when feed is scarce. The thorns cause irritation and inflammatory sores. Sheep brushing amongst the pear accumulate numerous thorns in their wool and hides, causing downgrading of the wool and discomfort to the sheep. Of course, the thorns don't impress shearers either!

### LEGAL STATUS:

Sweet briar is a declared **NOXIOUS WEED** within the Shire of Inverell. Please see legal requirements overleaf.

### MORE INFORMATION? PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL WEEDS OFFICER:

Les Tanner 02 6728 8284 - mobile 0427 241 806

Phil Sutton 02 6728 8244 - 0418 446 068

OR check out Council's website on [www.inverell.nsw.gov.au](http://www.inverell.nsw.gov.au), Environmental Services section

## COMMON PEAR (CONTINUED)

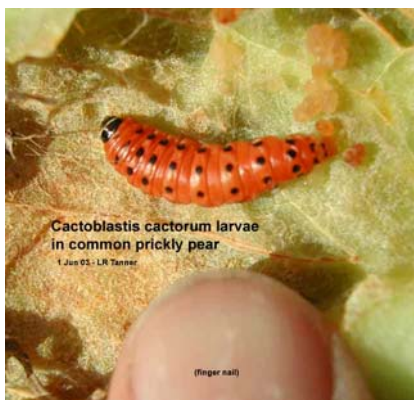
### CC4(C) MANAGEMENT PLAN - LEGAL REQUIREMENTS within the Shire of Inverell

The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled by conducting an on-going and effective treatment program to reduce plant numbers and to minimise the plant's negative impact on the land. Any biological control or other control program directed by the local control authority must be implemented. All reasonable measures are to be taken to ensure vehicles, machinery and livestock moved off the property are free of the plant. Plant must not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed.

### CONTROL METHODS

**Ploughing\*** and cultivation takes care of prickly pear, but plants need to be broken up and disturbed a number of times before they give up. One run with a plough will multiply each plant by the number of leaves left lying on top of the ground! The plant pieces need to be buried or badly damaged before they rot away completely. [\*State laws apply in respect of land clearing.]

**Burning\*\*.** It takes a lot of heat to kill a plant, especially one with a large butt still under the ground. Plants pulled out of the ground and thrown on the fire are easier to kill. Suitable for small infestations only. [\*\*Subject to compliance with local bushfire restrictions].



Biological control is a good control option for large areas of pear, especially in the dry and warmer areas of the State. There are two control agents for common pest pear - cactoblastis (left) and cochineal (right). Biological control is a practical and cost-effective means of keeping this pear in check, provided the insects are given a bit of help. Please check out



[www.northwestweeds.nsw.gov.au/common\\_pear.htm](http://www.northwestweeds.nsw.gov.au/common_pear.htm) for more information on getting the best results from biological control.

Chemical treatment of common pest pear is effective, because the plants are easy to find. According to NSW DPI's excellent booklet "*Noxious and Environmental Weed Control Handbook 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*", herbicide treatments include:

Chemical	Rate	Comments
Triclopyr 600 g/L eg Garlon 600®	3.0 L per 100 L water or 1.0 L per 75 L diesel	Apply as a thorough foliar spray
Triclopyr 300 g/L + picloram 100g/L eg Grazon DS® / Grazon Extra see <a href="#">permit PER10544</a>	500 ml per 100 L water	Apply as a thorough foliar spray (Note: very slow acting herbicide)
Triclopyr 240 g/L + picloram 120 g/L Access®	1.0 L per 60 L diesel	Folia application, thoroughly wet plants

### IMPORTANT: USE OF PESTICIDES – ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

Pesticides must only be used for the purpose for which they are registered and must not be used in any other situation or in any manner contrary to the directions on the label. Never use a herbicide in any way contrary to the label recommendations.

**DISCLAIMER:** The information contained herein is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Inverell Shire Council or the user's independent adviser.

LRT 19/3/10

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