

Blackberry in south-west WA contained by 'good science'

Treatment used in preventing the spread of American blackberry (*Rubus laudatus*) in south-west Western Australia has succeeded, according to a recent report.



Credit: [David McClenaghan/scienceimage](#)

The report into WA's blackberry buffer zone – also known as the blackberry containment line – shows that measures taken to treat the weed are working.

The containment zone, first established in 2007, runs 100 km between the towns of Australind and Darkan. It was identified by the [WA Department of Agriculture and Food \(DAFWA\)](#) and [CSIRO](#) as the best place to put a buffer zone to prevent the weed from moving south.

'The success has come down to two main achievements. The first relates to the control of the blackberry and the second, community ownership of the project,' says the report's principal author, DAFWA's Andrew Reeves.

According to Mr Reeves, good science was the key to providing strategic control of the weed, making the project value-for-money, and identifying areas where the project could have the best effect.

'The answer has been to use science to identify that all blackberry is the same and use a geographic separation of the species, along with the biological control agent for the common European blackberry to make an asset.

'This is unique in that we have made a buffer zone that is in itself a valuable asset in the fight against weed spread.

'The review of the buffer zone has led to speculation that it could be used to treat other weed species along rivers in the northern wheat belt.

'A buffer zone could also be used along rivers in the north wheat belt, as climate change could make it possible for

large woody weeds like mesquite, *Parkinsonia* and *Acacia nilotica*, to venture towards the south west.’

From 2009–2011, funding allowed for more than 350 hectares within the buffer zone to be identified and treated.

This involved the use of contract weed sprayers or the supply of herbicides to private land owners, along with the running of community workshops by the South West Catchments Council (SWCC) to increase awareness of the buffer zone and control methods.

Source: Science Network WA

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