

A STRATEGIC REGIONAL APPROACH TO GAMBA GRASS CONTROL AND ERADICATION

The West Arnhem region is in the Class A eradication zone for Gamba Grass, and keeping Gamba Grass out of the West Arnhem region will require a strategic approach which considers ecology, hygiene, fire and monitoring. Gamba Grass growing within the neighbouring Class B control zone poses a high spread risk to the Class A eradication zone because people move freely between the two zones, potentially spreading weeds on vehicles, machinery and equipment. A high degree of vigilance and a zero-tolerance approach is critical. One missed plant can produce seed that can then be spread to other areas.

Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) has identified the following points as key to managing Gamba Grass and preventing spread in the West Arnhem region:

- Gamba Grass exhibits strongly seasonal growth and a predictable flowering cycle. Seeding occurs in May and frequently coincides with dry season mitigation burning, which exacerbates spread. **Prevent seeding by treating plants prior to May.**
- Gamba Grass is increased by fire. The current distribution of Gamba Grass in the NT is concentrated around populated areas, and road networks in these areas. In these areas the road verges are exposed to frequent burning, in addition to slashing, grading and other maintenance activities that assist seed spread and establishment. **Prevent spread by treating plants in road corridors before the fire season.**
- Gamba Grass spread is fire assisted and human assisted, and also water and disturbance related. **Prioritise survey for and treatment of Gamba Grass in areas such as road corridors, creek lines, and high visitation sites, where seeds could be deposited and become sources of spread.**
- Telstra towers and other infrastructure sites in remote areas pose a hidden risk – surveys in 2019 to the east of Kakadu identified Gamba Grass growing at two out of four Telstra tower sites. Seeds may have come in at the time of construction, or with maintenance services. **Make a point of going out of the way, to check for Gamba Grass in remote or isolated disturbed areas such as gravel pits and Telstra towers.**
- Good weed hygiene practice is critical in spread prevention. **Always check equipment, vehicles, clothes etc. for seeds and never travel through or work in seeding patches of Gamba Grass.** Become familiar with weed hygiene principles through attending an accredited training course: AHC BIO201 Inspect and Clean Machinery for Plant, Animal and Soil Material.
- Collection of accurate Gamba Grass data is critical, so that follow up treatment can occur exactly at the correct spot. Record locations of new points and treat as a priority. Save the information so that the area can be located again for follow up. **Gamba Grass can be reported to TNRM as part of the ‘STOP GAMBA IN ITS TRACKS’ campaign.** TNRM’s goal is to ensure all reported locations receive follow up treatment for three seasons to ensure eradication.
- **Patrol of roadsides to detect and remove emerging Gamba Grass.** This is critical for stopping spread and establishment. All land management groups across the Top End need to be involved. **Vigilance both on your own country and across regions, plus knowledge sharing and awareness raising, will help keep clean areas clean.** Gamba Grass spread is a regional issue, needing a regional approach and regional awareness.

