



Government
of South Australia

Declared Plant Policy

This policy relates to natural resources management under section 9(1)(d) of the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (the Act), enabling co-ordinated implementation and promotion of sound management programs and practices for the use, development or protection of natural resources of the State. Specifically, this policy provides guidance on the use and management of natural resources relating to the prevention or control of impacts caused by pest species of plants that may have an adverse effect on the environment, primary production or the community, as per object s7(1)(f) of the Act.

European blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* aggregate)

European blackberry is a spiny perennial subshrub that forms large impenetrable thickets. It was widely planted in colonial times as a food plant and is naturalised in the higher rainfall parts of South Australia as a weed of native vegetation and pasture.

Management Plan for European Blackberry

Outcome

- Maintain pasture production and the integrity of native vegetation.

Objectives

- Any further spread of European blackberry into native vegetation or pasture prevented.
- High priority infestations controlled.
- Major infestations contained for phased reduction according to regional plans.

Best Practice Implementation

- Regional landscape boards and Green Adelaide to ensure high priority infestations, as determined by the board, on public or private land are controlled.
- Regional landscape boards and Green Adelaide to develop and implement plans to contain priority infestations on properties and roadsides, and progressively reduce the extent and impact of blackberry in their regions.

Regional Implementation

Refer to regional management plans for further details.

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Region	Actions
Alinytjara Wilurara	Limited action
Eyre Peninsula	Limited action
Green Adelaide	Contain spread
Hills and Fleurieu	Contain spread
Kangaroo Island	Destroy infestations
Limestone Coast	Destroy infestations
Murraylands and Riverland	Protect sites
Northern and Yorke	Protect sites
South Australian Arid Lands	Monitor

Declaration

To implement this policy, European blackberry is declared under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* throughout the whole of the State of South Australia. Its entry to South Australia, movement or transport on a public road by itself or as a contaminant, or sale by itself or as a contaminant are prohibited. Green Adelaide, and landscape boards in all regions except the Alinytjara Wilurara and SA Arid Lands, may require land owners to control blackberry plants growing on their land. These authorities are required to control plants on road reserves in their regions, and may recover costs from the adjoining landowners.

European blackberry is declared in category 2 under the Act, for the purpose of setting maximum penalties and for other purposes. Any permit to allow its entry, road transport or sale can only be issued by the Chief Executive of the Department for Environment and Water or their delegate pursuant to section 197.

Under the *Landscape South Australia (General) Regulations 2020*, Regulation 27 specifies the conditions under which a person is exempt from the operation of section 186 and may transport wool, grain or other produce or goods carrying European blackberry on public roads, or bring them into the State. Regulation 28 specifies conditions under which a person is exempt from the operation of section 188(2) and may sell wool, grain or other produce or goods carrying European blackberry. Note that certain produce or goods may be excluded from these general movement and sale exemptions by Gazettal Notice of the Chief Executive, DEW.

The following sections of the Act apply to blackberry throughout each of the regions noted below:

Region									
Sections of Act	AW	EP	GA	HF	KI	LC	MR	NY	SAAL
186(1) Prohibiting entry to area	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
186(2) Prohibiting movement on public roads*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
188(1) Prohibiting sale of the plant *	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
188(2) Prohibiting sale of contaminated goods	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
190 Requiring notification of presence									
192(1) Land owners to destroy the plant on their properties									
192(2) Land owners to control the plant on their properties		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
194 Recovery of control costs on adjoining road reserves		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

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Sections marked * do not apply to harvested blackberry fruit.

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by 2025, or in the event of a change in a regional management plan for blackberry, or a change in its status as a Weed of National Significance.

Weed Risk

Invasiveness

European blackberry infestations occur close to sites where it was formerly planted for fruit production. The clonal infestations spread rapidly by vegetative growth, with stems forming new roots where they touch the ground (tip layering).

Seeds are spread by birds and mammals that eat the fruit. Germination depends on adequate rainfall, and few seedlings get established.

Although spread is slow compared to weeds with high seedling recruitment, established infestations on neglected properties can be expensive to control.

Impacts

Blackberries form dense permanent thickets that can completely exclude other vegetation and progressively encroach on pasture. The thickets provide refuge for rabbits, although they have some value as shelter for native animals such as bandicoots.

In production forests, blackberry infestations can impede access and replanting operations.

Potential distribution

Blackberry infestations occur in forested gullies, on roadsides and along creeks, extending into the adjoining permanent pastures. These vulnerable habitats occur discontinuously in the southern part of the State within the 350 mm annual isohyet.

Feasibility of Containment

Control costs

Herbicides treatments are available to control and destroy blackberry infestations. Herbicide application may be labour-intensive due to the difficulty of accessing large infestations and those in steep gullies.

One biological control agent, the leaf rust *Phragmidium violaceum*, has been established in South Australia for over 20 years but has only a low impact on most infestations.

Persistence

Blackberry thickets are long-lived, persisting indefinitely as they resist invasion by other woody plants while tolerating a high level of shade from any trees that establish.

Current distribution

European blackberry is localised in the Eyre Peninsula, Northern and Yorke, and Kangaroo Island regions. Major infestations occur in the Hills and Fleurieu, South Australian Murray Darling Basin, and Limestone Coast regions.

State Level Risk Assessment

Assessment using the Biosecurity SA Weed Risk Management System gave the following comparative weed risk and feasibility of containment scores by land use:

Land use	Weed Risk	Feasibility of control	Response at State Level
Grazing - southern	very high 278	high 28	destroy infestations
Native vegetation	medium 93	medium 34	manage sites
Forestry	medium 51	medium 33	manage sites
Perennial horticulture	low 22	high 30	monitor
Urban	negligible 6	very high 2	monitor

Considerations

European blackberry, *Rubus fruticosus*, is an aggregate of hundreds of agamospecies (clones that reproduce by vegetative propagation and non-sexually produced seeds). At least 10 of these agamospecies occur in South Australia, the most widespread being *Rubus anglocandicans* and *R. ulmifolius*. These blackberries were introduced in the 19th century for fruit production in home gardens and were deliberately naturalised in forested gullies, on roadsides and along creeks.

Blackberry is a threat to permanent pasture in the southern part of the State, where risk assessment indicates destruction of infestations as the appropriate strategy, and to native vegetation where the strategy is to manage sites due to lower accessibility. These strategies are implemented according to the levels of infestation and risk in each region.

As blackberry is localised on Kangaroo Island, it is intended to destroy infestations in that region. The Limestone Coast region has a strategy of destroying infestations in pasture while controlling and preventing spread in forestry and native vegetation. The Northern and Yorke region aims to protect sites. Murraylands and Riverland region also protects sites in native vegetation, manages the weed where infestations are well established, and controls on all roadsides and on properties close to key assets.

The Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board aim to contain spread by containment and targeting priority infestations for destruction. Where blackberry provides critical habitat for native fauna, a staged conversion/transition from blackberry habitat to habitat consisting of native flora able to provide equivalent habit value for the fauna species needs to be implemented.

In the Eyre Peninsula region, action is limited to protecting high value native vegetation and extension to increase awareness of the weed. Blackberry is monitored in the South Australian Arid Lands and limited action is required in the Alinytjara Wilurara region.

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The fruit of wild blackberries on roadsides and private property is collected illegally for home use and casual marketing through some metropolitan fruit shops. It is unlikely that this practice contributes to the spread of blackberry by seed - indeed, it may reduce the quantity of fruit available for animal vectors. As wild blackberry gathering is a tradition seen by many people as a right, and in view of the demand for blackberry fruit and jam, prohibition of harvesting and transport of the fruit is not workable and would not reduce the spread of blackberry seed.

The native species of *Rubus* are not part of the *R. fruticosus* aggregate. Nor are the Bundy blackberry (*R. laudatus*), the dewberry (*R. trivialis*), or the cultivated raspberry (*R. idaeus*) and its hybrids with various American *Rubus* species of brambleberries - boysenberry, loganberry, tayberry and youngberry. Many of the cultivars grown for blackberry fruit production are also derived from North American brambleberries and are not within the *R. fruticosus* aggregate. Others, such as 'Black Satin', 'Chester Thornless', 'Dirksen Thornless'; 'Loch Ness', 'Smoothstem' and 'Thornfree' have *R. fruticosus* ancestry but have been explicitly excluded from the declaration.

Synonymy

Rubus fruticosus L. aggregate, (= section *Rubus*)

including, but not exclusively, the following agamospecies:

Rubus anglocandicans A.Newton, *Watsonia* 11: 243. (1977).

Rubus erythrospis Edees & A.Newton, *Watsonia* 12: 135. (1978).

Rubus laciniatus Willd., *Hort. Berol.* 2(8): t. 82. (1806).

Rubus leucostachys Schleich. ex Sm., *Engl. Fl.* 2: 403. (1824).

Rubus phaeocarpus W.C.R. Watson, *J. Bot., Lond.* 75: 157. (1937).

Rubus riddelsdellii Rilstone, *J. Linn. Soc. Lond., Bot.* 53: 415. (1950).

Rubus rubritinctus W.C.R.Watson, *Watsonia* 3: 287. (1956).

Rubus ulmifolius Schott, *Isis (Oken)* 2(5): 821. (1818).

Rubus vestitus Weihe in Bluff and Fingerh., *Comp. Fl. Germ.* 1: 684. (1825).

References

Evans, K.J., Symon, D.E., Whalen, M.A., Hosking, J.R., Barker, R.M. & Oliver, J.A. (2007) Systematics of the *Rubus fruticosus* aggregate (Rosaceae) and other exotic *Rubus* taxa in Australia. *Australian Systematic Botany* 20:187-251.

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Minister for Environment and Water

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