

Mister tested as weapon against Prickly Acacia

THE weather was perfect for the long awaited field trials of a new, and potentially cost-saving weapon in the war on Prickly Acacia which were held at Audreystone near Barcaldine recently.

The rain stopped, for awhile at least, the dust had settled, and the trees were growing, so conditions were close to perfect to trial the specially equipped misting machine.

Property owners, Brett and Naomi Wehl, were more than happy to participate in the Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ) project to investigate the potential for the Air Shear (orchard spray unit), to control heavy Prickly Acacia infestations across semi-arid rangelands.

The small scale trial, had plenty of expertise on board, with John McKenzie, Rangelands Weeds Officer at Biosecurity Qld's Invasive Plants and Animals unit, Charters Towers, and Nathan March, national co-ordinator of Biosecurity Qld's Mesquite, Parkinsonia and Prickly Acacia program at Cloncurry.

Funded by the State government, the trial involved applying three different volumes of Starane herbicide to plots in a nine year old stand of Prickly Acacia.

As Starane is not licensed to be used in air shear spray units, the trial was conducted under a minor-use permit which restricts



Air Shear unit in action behind the AACC tractor spraying Starane mix on nine year old Prickly Acacia at Audreystone. Photos courtesy DCG.*

the size of the treatment.

"This has been a truly collaborative project," Leanne Kohler, chief executive officer of Desert Channels Group said.

"With funding from the Queensland Government, along with generous support from partners and sponsors, we have been able to run scientific trials to test the effectiveness of this unusual method of woody weed control."

The Air Shear unit was provided by AGL and Galilee Energy, the tractor driving the unit was supplied by the Australian Agricultural College Corporation, transport was courtesy of Suffren Earthmoving, the chemical by Dow AgriSciences, the water truck donated by Black Toyota, the water tanks by Longreach Regional Council, steel posts and tags came from Landmark (Longreach), and the water pump was courtesy of Smith Bros.

Ms Kohler said that if



*Monitoring wind speed and temperature was a critical part of the trials.**

the trials prove to be the success they're hoping for, it will be a real boon for landholders struggling to get on top of the fresh growth of Prickly Acacia resulting from recent good seasons.

"Later in the year,

we will be running a series of field days in the Barcaldine, Longreach, Murrumbidgee and Winton areas to showcase the use of air shear spray units, herbicides and the results of the Audreystone trial," she said.