Clarence Valley Cane Toad Operations Newsletter

Volume 2—June 2011

What is this?

This is the second volume of the Clarence Valley Cane Toad Operations Newsletter. You have received this because it is thought that you live in an area infested with cane toads—or at risk of becoming infested.

Volume 2 gives an update of what is happening with cane toads locally, research news and how you can reduce cane toads breeding on your place. Check out the new Toad Target Property Project article—big things are planned for next summer!

If you would like to know more about cane toads or what the CIA is doing, check out the CIA website at www.cvcia.org.au or by phoning the CIA Coordinator, Sharon Lehman on 0411 020 394.

Did you know?

Cane toads are a lazy, cumbersome animal that have difficulty pushing through thick vegetation. They prefer nice cleared areas and gently sloping edges down to fresh waterbodies.

Dams free of vegetation and gently sloped suit toads.

Cane toads also need to access water every 3 to 6 days. These are some of the characteristics we now know about cane toads which is helping to shape how we reduce their breeding success. If possible, don't slash right to the edge of your dam or try planting some vegetation around your frog pond.

What's happening?

Cane toads are continuing to spread throughout the Clarence Valley. They have now been seen on Jackybulbin Rd, Mororo and a small number have been reported at Ashby this year.

Other areas of concern are sightings along Sandon Road, Bosches Waterhole, Wallaby Lane and Goodwood Island. As predicted by CVCIA, cane toads are now in Maclean with a number of sightings found adjacent to the Wherrett Park Sporting Complex.

CIA volunteers picked up over 4,000 cane toads over the previous season (June 2010—May 2011).

CVCIA volunteers are still struggling to try and slow the frontline down. With only a small number of active toad busting volunteers we have to be strategic and work where there is the most chance of minimising the spread and reducing the harm to native wildlife.

Reduced funding for NPWS has meant they are not able to collect as far afield as in previous seasons and contract ecologist Russell Jago is largely focused on the Brooms Head area.

But there is some good news. Next season, CVCIA will be stepping up the fight in the form of habitat modification education & exclusion trials.

LATEST RESEARCH

Dr David Newell from Southern Cross University has been studying the impact of cane toads in the Northern Rivers area for many years. But apart from this and a few Honours projects, there has been very little research attention given to cane toads in NSW.

However, good news. The University of Sydney's "Team Bufo", headed by Professor Rick Shine are confident of receiving funding for an extensive 5 year cane toad research project in northern NSW. CIA volunteers have already been assisting and supporting researchers with their on-ground knowledge. Next season should be very exciting.

The more we learn about toads, the more chance we have of exploiting the chinks in their ecological armour.

It is really a case of "know thine enemy". What the researchers discover about cane toads can then be used against the toad to take advantage of any weaknesses.

For example, Team Bufo have discovered that they can release a pheromone into the water that scares the cane toad tadpoles into metamorphosing earlier and dispersing from the water sooner. This makes the small cane toad weaker and more vulnerable to predation or desiccation. And more importantly, the pheromone has no impact on the native frog tadpoles.

CVCIA Landcare and other organizations can then apply information learnt from this type of research to the field and help land managers to reduce the breeding success of cane toads.

Lee Scott-Virtue from the Kimberley Toadbusters was on 60 minutes recently and stated they were "buying time for the researchers". That's all we can do at this stage but at least NSW is going to be given the attention we feel it deserves!

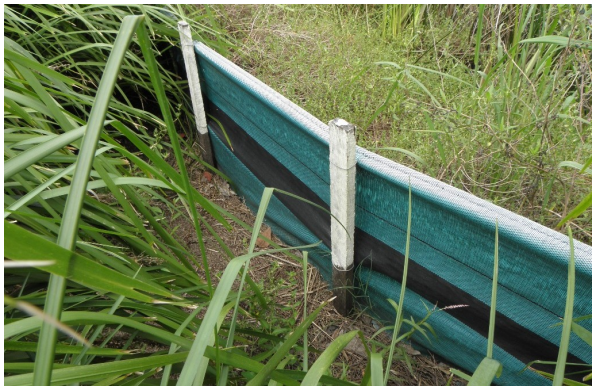
EXCLUDING TOADS

Knowing that cane toads must access water regularly and are lazy, cumbersome animals, we can use this to our advantage in areas where toads are using water to breed.

Dams, drains or even small frog ponds with steep sides or dense vegetation around them are very difficult for cane toads to access. By retaining vegetation around waterbodies or even planting suitable species, you can make your water areas less inviting for cane toads.

Retaining vegetation around dams can hamper toads.

A 60 mm high siltmesh fence will stop cane toads accessing a waterbody, but this may also have some impact on your local native fauna or livestock, so it is neither wise nor practical to fence off all dams. Feel free to call Sharon Lehman, CIA Cane Toad Coordinator to discuss your options 0411 020 394.



Fences are very effective at excluding cane toads.

CVCIA Landcare and Clarence Landcare have developed a flyer called ***Reducing cane toads on your property*** which deals with ways to reduce the breeding success of cane toads through habitat manipulation. This flyer is available for download from the CVCIA website www.cvcia.org.au or by contacting CIA or Clarence Landcare on 6643 5009.

Toad target Property Project

Some local landowners have already heard about our exciting new initiative, the Toad Target Property Project (TTPP). This is a way to acknowledge land managers that are making an effort to control cane toads on their property and look at different ways we might be able to reduce the impact of cane toads in areas where they have become established. Call Sharon on 0411 020 394 for more information or to be sent the form.

The TTPP was launched at our highly successful cane toad landholder field day early May. At the event we discussed the pros and cons of different control methods and why some dams are preferred by cane toads over others. Exclusion methods such as fencing and vegetation barriers were shown and Clarence Landcare CSO Julie Mousley demonstrated plants suitable for planting around dams.

CVCIA Cane Toad Coordinator Sharon Lehman discusses dam features with Mororo landowners at the first Cane Toad Field Day.

CVCIA would like to host two more landholder field days next summer. If you would be interested in hosting or attending a cane toad field day in your area, please contact Sharon Lehman on 0411 020 394 or email sharon@cvcia.org.au.

Did you know?

While it may all seem a bit hopeless sometimes, CVCIA Landcare has committed to give cane toad control 3 or 4 good hard years to try and slow the frontline while the research catches up and we are two years into that commitment.

It is important for us to track the spread of toads.

What we really need (apart from the obvious where every toad suddenly drops dead!) is to track the rate of spread of cane toads. Please report all toad sightings so we can see how fast they are moving, identify new areas of infestation and monitor if our efforts are effective or not.

Seen a Toad?

Dazza used courtesy of Andrew Silke

Report all Cane Toads in the Clarence Valley!

to the CIA: 0411 020 394
via website: www.cvcia.org.au
or email: toads@cvcia.org.au

Did you know?

The CVCIA Landcare volunteers now also help locals to trap and control Common (Indian) Mynas.

The Common Myna section of the CIA website has just been upgraded and includes video and maps showing areas mynas sighted and where they have been trapped. Call Laura Noble on 6649 4712 or email mynas@cvcia.org.au.

What now?

Even though we would like to, CVCIA volunteers just cannot get to every property, street and dam to collect cane toads. We urgently need more volunteers for regular toadbusts starting approximately next October.

CVCIA Landcare are happy to support and advise to help you control your toads though. The CIA website www.cvcia.org.au has many tips and tricks including downloadable information sheets for you to read. You can also report your toad collection efforts through the website.

Imagine if we all did the same thing on our own patch! There would be no toads.

Come on, do something!

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CIA
www.cvcia.org.au

Find out what is being done in your area to reduce the spread of the cane toad and how you can help.

Landcare CVCIA

Supporters of CVCIA operations

These organizations are all working together to reduce the spread of cane toads in the Clarence Valley.

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