



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: David Boorman, ACT

Category: Australian Government Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices Award

When African lovegrass (ALG) appeared on David Boorman's cattle farm Cypress Springs, brought in by power-line maintenance vehicles, he immediately adopted a policy of zero tolerance. AGL is a threat to biodiversity and people – burning hotter than native grass, it's a serious fire hazard. Over the last 25 years David's containment and advocacy work has won him the respect of local farmers as well as ACT policymakers.

ALG washed down the Murrumbidgee River in the 1980s, then quickly spread out of the corridor via roadside slashers and vehicles, spreading across local farms and into Canberra. David's painstaking work, spraying every inch of his property, has preserved the grassland species diversity on his 474-hectare property, in addition to creating a buffer zone that has helped prevent ALG's spread into the neighbouring Namadgi National Park, on the western side of the Murrumbidgee River.

David has been behind information campaigns and workshops the Territory and around the Tharwa district to demonstrate best practice. Certain safeguards he adopted early – like insisting on vehicle washdown prior to farm access – meant ignoring grumbling from utility companies, at a time when such measures weren't yet commonplace.

As well as sharing his knowledge with neighbours, David has advocated directly to government. One challenge was changing attitudes and practises in roadside maintenance, introducing sequencing spraying before slashing a significant win. This basic innovation has been implemented on the Tharwa to Tidbinbilla Road, now a barrier to the spread of ALG, instead of expediting it.

Another challenge is convincing environmental grant programs to reward farm practices that are sustainable in the long term. In the ACT recent grants have enabled spray cropping to convert infested native pastures to exotic mixes, a method of AGL control and containment that, while it increases year-round productivity, also reduces biodiversity.

For his part, David has worked to ensure that his pastures do not become monocultures, chiefly by going over every inch of the ground on foot or in a vehicle. Spraying to reduce the weed load in infested locations might be laborious – even tedious – but it's essential. Due to the rapid growth and spread of ALG, David covers the same ground three times during the growing season, then again the next year with the seeds that germinated.

Control and containment requires eternal vigilance, but the most effective method of ALG control is prevention. By eradicating weeds before they have a chance to develop and spread – not just ALG but blackberry and briar rose – small, simple and affordable techniques bring good results. "We don't have the moral right, through ignorance or laziness, to destroy nature," David said. "I won't see any financial benefit in my lifetime, but life is more than being greedy for the last dollar."

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

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Web Summary

David Boorman's weed containment and advocacy work has won him the respect of local farmers as well as ACT policymakers over the last 25 years. David has preserved the grassland diversity on his 474-hectare property at Cypress Springs through comprehensive spraying to eradicate African lovegrass, which in turn has stymied the weed's spread into neighbouring bushland. Importantly, David's methods preserve native plants rather than destroying them in the name of containment. His on-ground work has been complemented by a commitment to sharing his experience with other farmers, running workshops around the state and the Paddy Rivers district to talk about best practice. David has also advocated directly to government, resulting in a new, environmentally friendly approach to roadside maintenance in his region.

Pull-out quote:

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