



# Integrated Weed Management in Australian cropping systems

A training resource for  
farm advisors



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**Front cover:** *Regular paddock monitoring and consultation with your agronomist are key aspects of developing and implementing an IWM plan. Peter Rogan of 'Fairview' talks to his agronomist, Derek Gunn, NSW.*

Photos: Andrew Storrie and Warwick Holding

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Research is iterative, challenging, exciting and tedious, regardless of any other descriptors such as applied, basic and pure that might be used to describe it. In the case of weed management in Australia, the challenge is of a long-term nature, progress is often slow and the level of infestation in Australia is intimidating. The cost to agriculture and the natural environment is enormous and progress depends on how we build up our scientific and technological expertise and engage with land managers.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management (Weeds CRC) and its predecessor CRC have now assembled some 11 years of collaborative research into weed management in our cropping industries. Of course, the research of the CRC builds on the research work and experience of generations and partner organisations at both national and state levels, which have all been part of a large network of research and extension people. The state of weed science at tertiary level and the funding of agriculture by governments meant that it was essential for there to be a cooperating and collaborating body, such as the Weeds CRC, so that research effort could be concentrated and priorities set.

This integrated weed management (IWM) manual presents the most up-to-date compilation on integrated weed management for cropping. However, much of the information will also inform other land managers about the realities of weed science and where most progress may be made in weed management and control.

At researcher, technician and communication levels, the Weeds CRC is very much aware of the commercial realities of the cropping industries, and that adoption and integration of many techniques may be difficult for individual land managers due to a raft of reasons. Scientific 'breakthroughs' or newly found approaches are not necessarily easy to develop, apply and communicate. The Board of the Weeds CRC is mindful that the presentation of the results of our research must be user-friendly and practical.

This manual traverses the economics of IWM, presenting case studies to demonstrate the gains that can be made. The perplexing issue of short-term profit versus long-term returns is discussed. A detailed section on herbicide resistance, the driving force for the widespread adoption of IWM, is succinctly presented. The reintroduction of indiscriminate cultivation to control weeds on our relatively fragile soils would result in increased land degradation; again, the manual outlines some case studies in this area of research, presenting a rationale for the use of strategic cultivation. The more pertinent aspects of agronomy are detailed and should enhance and reinforce the on-farm knowledge of farmers. The range of tactics that farmers may use to manage weed populations is presented, and not just the control of weeds for yield, followed by a section on practical implementation. Australia's 20 most important cropping weeds are profiled, with easily digested information on how to manage them. Case studies are included to show agronomists and farmers how the tactics and strategies in this manual work for farmers.

I trust that this compilation will be of widespread use and interest. The Weeds CRC will appreciate ideas and feedback on any ways in which this manual can be made more comprehensive or accurate.

**The Hon John Kerin**

Chair of the Board

CRC for Australian Weed Management

## Table of contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of tables</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of figures</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Key findings</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Key benefits and practicalities</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>xxv</b>
<b>The IWM Manual</b>	<b>xxviii</b>
<b>Section 1: Economic benefits of adopting IWM</b>	<b>1</b>
The economic benefits of adopting integrated weed management	1
Estimating the economic benefits and costs of IWM	1
Estimating the economic benefits of IWM using simulation models	4
Simulation model 1: Dynamic optimisation model	4
Simulation model 2: Combining a range of IWM tactics targeting annual ryegrass	5
Simulation model 3: RIM model – herbicide resistance, annual ryegrass and IWM	6
Simulation model 4: Multi-species (annual ryegrass and wild radish) RIM model	6
Simulation model 5: Multi species (annual ryegrass and wild radish) RIM model and GM glyphosate-resistant canola crop	7
Simulation model 6: WeedRisk model – inclusion of variability and uncertainty	8
<b>Section 2: Herbicide resistance</b>	<b>11</b>
Herbicides	11
What is herbicide resistance?	11
Commonly used terms	12
How does a weed become resistant to a herbicide?	13
Factors influencing the development of resistance	13
Herbicide resistance in Australia	16
Extent of resistance to selective herbicides in Australia	19
Extent of resistance to non-selective herbicides in Australia	20
Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group	22
CropLife Australia Ltd Herbicide Resistance Management Committee	22
Weed species at risk	22
Herbicide resistance testing	24
The future	24
<b>Section 3: Agronomy to enhance the implementation and benefits of weed management tactics</b>	<b>29</b>
Agronomy 1 Crop choice and sequence	29
Crop sequencing to minimise soil- and stubble-borne disease and nematodes	34
Agronomy 2 Improving crop competition	36
Crop type	36
Sowing rate	37
Row spacing	40
Sowing depth	42
Sowing time	43
Soil properties	44
Fertiliser use and placement	44
Disease and insect pest management	45

Agronomy 3	Herbicide tolerant crops	46
Agronomy 4	Improving pasture competition	49
Agronomy 5	Fallow phase	50
Agronomy 6	Controlled traffic or tramlining for optimal herbicide application	52
<b>Section 4: Tactics for managing weed populations</b>		<b>57</b>
Tactic Group 1	Deplete weed seed in the target area soil seedbank	57
	Tactic 1.1 Burning residues	57
	Tactic 1.2 Encouraging insect predation of seed	61
	Tactic 1.3 Inversion ploughing	62
	Tactic 1.4 Autumn tickle	65
	Tactic 1.5 Delayed sowing	68
Tactic Group 2	Kill weed(s) (seedlings) in the target area	71
	Tactic 2.1 Fallow and pre-sowing cultivation	71
	Tactic 2.2 Herbicides	74
	Tactic 2.2a Knockdown (non-selective) herbicides for fallow and pre-sowing control	77
	Tactic 2.2b Double knockdown or 'double knock'	79
	Tactic 2.2c Pre-emergent herbicides	82
	Tactic 2.2d Selective post-emergent herbicides	86
	Tactic 2.3 Weed control in wide-row cropping	90
	Tactic 2.3a Inter-row shielded spraying and crop-row band spraying	93
	Tactic 2.3b Inter-row cultivation	95
	Tactic 2.4 Spot spraying, chipping, hand roguing and wiper technologies	96
	Tactic 2.5 Biological control	97
Tactic Group 3	Stop weed seed-set	101
	Tactic 3.1 In-crop weed management for seed-set control	101
	Tactic 3.1a Spray-topping with selective herbicides	102
	Tactic 3.1b Crop-topping with non-selective herbicides	105
	Tactic 3.1c Wiper technology	108
	Tactic 3.1d Crop desiccation and windrowing	110
	Tactic 3.2 Pasture spray-topping	112
	Tactic 3.3 Silage and hay – crops and pastures	116
	Tactic 3.4 Renovation crops and pastures – green manuring, brown manuring, mulching and hay freezing	120
	Tactic 3.5 Grazing – actively managing weeds in pastures	124
Tactic Group 4	Prevent viable weed seeds within the target area being added to the soil seedbank	128
	Tactic 4.1 Weed seed collection at harvest	128
	Tactic 4.1a Narrow header trail	131
	Tactic 4.1b Chaff cart	131
	Tactic 4.1c Other options for weed seed collection at harvest	132
	Tactic 4.2 Grazing crop residues	133
Tactic Group 5	Prevent introduction of viable weed seed from external sources	136
	Tactic 5.1 On-farm hygiene	136
	Tactic 5.1a Sow weed-free seed	136
	Tactic 5.1b Manage weeds in non-crop areas	137
	Tactic 5.1c Clean farm machinery and vehicles	138
	Tactic 5.1d Manage livestock feeding and movement	139
<b>Section 5: Implementing an IWM program using tactic groups</b>		<b>141</b>
	Implementing integrated weed management plans	141
	Step 1 Review past actions	141
	Step 2 Assess the current weed status	142
	Step 3 Identify weed management opportunities within the cropping system	142
	Step 4 Match opportunities and weeds with suitable and effective tactics	142
	Step 5 Combine ideas using a rotational planner	144

Useful skills	144
Weed identification	144
Assessing weed population density	145
Assessing herbicide performance	146
Herbicide resistance testing	147
<hr/>	
<b>Section 6: Profiles of common weeds of cropping</b>	<b>149</b>
Weed 1. Annual ryegrass <i>Lolium rigidum</i>	149
Weed 2. Barley grass <i>Hordeum</i> spp.	153
Weed 3. Barnyard grasses <i>Echinochloa</i> spp.	158
Weed 4. Black bindweed <i>Fallopia convolvulus</i>	161
Weed 5. Bladder ketmia <i>Hibiscus trionum</i>	164
Weed 6. Brome grass <i>Bromus</i> spp.	166
Weed 7. Capeweed <i>Arctotheca calendula</i>	170
Weed 8. Common sowthistle <i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	173
Weed 9. Doublegee <i>Emex australis</i>	176
Weed 10. Fleabane <i>Conyza</i> spp.	178
Weed 11. Indian hedge mustard <i>Sysimbrium orientale</i>	181
Weed 12. Liverseed grass <i>Urochloa panicoides</i>	183
Weed 13. Muskweed <i>Myagrum perfoliatum</i>	185
Weed 14. Paradoxa grass <i>Phalaris paradoxa</i>	187
Weed 15. Silver grass <i>Vulpia</i> spp.	190
Weed 16. Sweet summer grass <i>Brachiaria ericuformis</i>	193
Weed 17. Turnip weed <i>Rapistrum rugosum</i>	196
Weed 18. Wild oats <i>Avena fatua</i> and <i>Avena ludoviciana</i>	199
Weed 19. Wild radish <i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	202
Weed 20. Wire weed <i>Polygonum aviculare</i> and <i>Polygonum arenastrum</i>	208
<hr/>	
<b>Section 7: Case studies</b>	<b>211</b>
IWM and tactic groups in the northern wheatbelt, Western Australia	211
IWM and tactic groups in the central wheatbelt, Western Australia	217
IWM and tactic groups on the Darling Downs, Queensland	222
IWM and tactic groups in the southern Wimmera, Victoria	226
IWM and tactic groups in the Riverina, New South Wales	232
IWM and tactic groups in the Mid North, South Australia	239
IWM and tactic groups in northern New South Wales	242
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<b>List of contributors</b>	<b>247</b>

## List of tables

Table E1	Elements of the economic costs and benefits for some individual tactics presented in Section 4	2
Table E2	Benefits of non-chemical weed control options	5
Table E3	Net present values (NPV) of alternative weed control strategies in a 20-year continuous cropping (wheat–lupin) rotation in the central wheat belt of Western Australia	5
Table E4	Consequences of restricting usage of selective herbicides over 10 years (assuming a Western Australian lupin–wheat rotation)	6

Table E5	Choice of crop–pasture rotation sequence and weed control practices over a 20-year period in Western Australia	7
Table E6	Equivalent annual profits and weed densities for two scenarios, and net value of glyphosate-resistant canola (\$/ha/year), for a wheat–wheat–canola–wheat–lupin rotation over a 20-year period in Western Australia	8
Table E7	The economic impact (\$/ha) of different crop and IWM systems on mean annualised discounted returns for wild oats, wild radish and annual ryegrass in a southern New South Wales cropping system	9
Table HR1	Initial frequency of individuals resistant to two Group B herbicides in three previously untreated annual ryegrass populations	14
Table HR2	Initial frequency of resistant individuals of annual ryegrass, estimated by modelling	14
Table HR3	Number of years of herbicide application before resistance evolves	14
Table HR4	Number of herbicide applications for South Australian herbicide resistance case study #1	15
Table HR5	Known populations of herbicide resistant grass weeds in Australia	17
Table HR6	Known populations of herbicide resistant broadleaf weeds in Australia	18
Table HR7	Survey results from South Australia in 1998 and 2003 showing significant increases in the levels of Group A, Group B and multiple resistance	19
Table HR8	Results of herbicide resistance in 185 randomly collected populations of annual ryegrass from the Mid North and Upper Yorke Peninsula in 2003 – data shows the percentage of samples with > 20% resistant individuals (measured as % survival)	19
Table HR9	Number of herbicide applications for two wild radish weed populations in Western Australian herbicide resistance case study #2	20
Table HR10	Factors that influence the risk of glyphosate resistance evolving in annual ryegrass	21
Table HR11	Number of herbicide applications for New South Wales herbicide resistance case study #3	21
Table HR12	Resistance watch: confirmed resistances in overseas populations of common weed species in crops	23
Table HR13	Herbicides classified according to primary mode-of-action (MOA) group	25
Table A1.1	Crop choice options to aid weed management	30
Table A2.1	The relative competitive ability of a number of annual winter crops and the crop yield reduction (percentage) from 300 plants/m <sup>2</sup> of annual ryegrass at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales	36
Table A2.2	The impact of the competitive ability of a range of wheat varieties on dry matter production of annual ryegrass at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales	36
Table A2.3	The relative ability of field pea varieties to suppress weed growth and seed-set, and to tolerate competition from weeds (annual ryegrass and wheat)	37
Table A2.4	Summary of some of the research conducted in Australia to assess the effect of increasing crop sowing rate in the presence of weeds	38
Table A2.5	Estimates of minimum wheat plant population (plants/m <sup>2</sup> ) based on pre-sowing rainfall (PSR, mm) and rainfall in the growing period (GSR, mm) in Western Australia	40
Table A2.6	Impact of N fertiliser (urea) placement on wheat yield in the presence and absence of annual ryegrass (expressed in quantitative yield (t/ha) and percentage loss due to weeds)	45
Table A4.1	Influence of pasture production on weed growth (Miling, Western Australia 2005). These annual legumes regenerated after a wheat crop and were ungrazed	49
Table A5.1	Contrast between simple winter and summer rainfall cropping systems	51
Table T1.1-1	Reduction in weed seed numbers following crop residue burning	57
Table T1.1-2	Likely impact of burning vs retaining crop residue prior to sowing on autumn weed seedling emergence in southern New South Wales	60

Table T1.2-1	Effect of time on cumulative weed seed removal across a 16 ha cropping paddock in Merredin, Western Australia. Figures represent the average percentage of seed removed for wild radish and annual ryegrass	61
Table T1.4-1	Effect of autumn tickle on wild radish soil seed reserves in Western Australia	65
Table T1.4-2	Effect of autumn tickle on annual ryegrass seedbank at Wongan Hills and Merredin, Western Australia	65
Table T1.4-3	The effect of shallow cultivation in autumn on the emergence pattern of paradoxa grass at Toowoomba, Queensland	65
Table T1.5-1	Effect of a 3-week delay in sowing on the number of mature annual ryegrass plants in the crop and on the following seedbank	68
Table T1.5-2	The impact of sowing time on yield and gross margin of short fallow wheat given a yield penalty of 5.5% per week and in the absence of weeds	69
Table T2.1-1	Wild radish survival in the soil (% of total remaining) depending on depth of burial in the soil	73
Table T2.1-2	Emergence of wild radish from various depths (% of total seed sown in May 1977)	73
Table T2.2a-1	Fallow situations – suggestions for weed control	78
Table T2.2b-1	Probabilities of glyphosate resistance evolution in annual ryegrass under four knockdown management strategies	80
Table T2.2c-1	Positive and negative aspects of using pre-emergent herbicides	86
Table T2.2d-1	Effect of annual applications of different herbicide treatments on wild oat seedbank numbers after 5 years	89
Table T2.3-1	Impact of row spacing on the yield of two chickpea varieties at Condobolin, New South Wales	91
Table T2.3-2	Effect of two row spacings on annual ryegrass density and field pea (cv Excell) yield at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales	92
Table T2.3-3	The effect of crop row spacing on grain yield (t/ha) at Tamworth, New South Wales, over 3 years	92
Table T2.3a-1	Effect of controlling blue lupin and wild radish in narrow-leaf lupins in Western Australia with Spray.Seed® at 1 L/ha and 2 L/ha at two application times	94
Table T3.1a-1	Seed-set of wild radish and turnip weed after the application of selective spray-topping herbicide at flowering	103
Table T3.1b-1	Crop-topping label registrations 2006	105
Table T3.1b-2	Crop-topping results from a range of farmers' paddocks tested in 2001, Geraldton, Western Australia	106
Table T3.1b-3	Effect of herbicide on desi chickpea yield and grain size at two crop-topping times of application, North Star, New South Wales, 1996	106
Table T3.1b-4	Reduction in wild radish seed-set (%) and grain yield losses of lupin cv Belara (%) compared to untreated control following crop-topping of lupins at various maturity stages, Western Australia	107
Table T3.1c-1	Seed-set reduction of charlock and wild radish using blanket wiping in chickpeas and barley	109
Table T3.1c-2	Seed production and seed viability of musk weed in eight commercial paddocks following glyphosate application with a weed wiper	109
Table T3.1d-1	Wild radish seed production levels in wheat, lupin, barley and canola crops as influenced by windrowing at crop maturity, Goomalling, Western Australia	110
Table T3.1d-2	Optimum timing for windrowing of different crops	111
Table T3.2-1	Spray-topping compared with mechanical management and targeted grazing for seed-set control in pastures	112
Table T3.2-2	Effect of spray-topping in the previous spring on percentage reduction of seedling numbers in the following autumn compared to untreated control	113

Table T3.2-3	Estimated costs of spray-topping	114
Table T3.2-4	Management options in the year following spray-topping (year 2)	115
Table T3.3-1	Effect of grazing by wethers (10 DSE/ha) and cutting times on weed seed production (seeds/m <sup>2</sup> ) of a mixed annual grass/sub clover/perennial grass pasture after spring cutting with no regrowth control, or continuously grazing for 1 or 2 years	117
Table T3.3-2	Effect of grazing by wethers (10 DSE/ha) and cutting times on species composition of a mixed annual grass/sub clover/perennial grass pasture the third spring (year 3) after cutting or grazing in each of the two previous springs	118
Table T3.3-3	Considerations to be made when choosing between hay and silage as a weed management tactic	119
Table T3.4-1	Contrasting green and brown manuring	121
Table T3.4-2	Annual ryegrass germination (plants/m <sup>2</sup> ) in autumn following green manuring, silage or hay production of forage break crops compared to pulses harvested for grain. Initial annual ryegrass population was 100 plants/m <sup>2</sup>	121
Table T3.4-3	Summary of weed biomass at flowering in a renovation crop year averaged across six Western Australian sites	122
Table T3.4-4	Annual ryegrass density in wheat crop following green manuring of different crops, Coorow, Western Australia	122
Table T3.4-5	Summary of suppression ability of different renovation crop species	123
Table T3.5-1	Effect of grazing and pasture cultivar on annual ryegrass tiller numbers (as at early October 2001) and estimated annual ryegrass seed-set. In-crop annual ryegrass was measured in September 2002 in a wheat crop sown without herbicide application	125
Table T4.1-1	Annual ryegrass seed collection during harvest for header and chaff cart systems in five locations in Western Australia, 1999	129
Table T4.1a-1	Percentage control of annual ryegrass with various seed collection techniques in Western Australia	131
Table I1	Tactic groups used to aid weed management planning	143
Table W1.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage annual ryegrass ( <i>Lolium rigidum</i> )	151
Table W2.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage barley grass ( <i>Hordeum</i> spp.)	155
Table W3.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage barnyard grass ( <i>Echinochloa</i> spp.)	160
Table W4.1	Distinguishing characteristics of black bindweed compared with similar weed species	161
Table W4.2	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage black bindweed ( <i>Fallopia convolvulus</i> )	163
Table W5.1	Characteristics of the two varieties of bladder ketmia	165
Table W5.2	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage bladder ketmia ( <i>Hibiscus trionum</i> )	166
Table W6.1	Distinguishing characteristics of <i>Bromus diandrus</i> and <i>B. rigidus</i>	167
Table W6.2	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage brome grass ( <i>Bromus</i> spp.)	168
Table W7.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage capeweed ( <i>Arctotheca calendula</i> )	171
Table W8.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage common sowthistle ( <i>Sonchus oleraceus</i> )	174
Table W9.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage doublegee or spiny emex ( <i>Emex australis</i> )	177

Table W10.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage fleabane ( <i>Conyza</i> spp.)	180
Table W11.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage Indian hedge mustard ( <i>Sisymbrium orientale</i> )	182
Table W12.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage liverseed grass ( <i>Urochloa panicoides</i> )	184
Table W13.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage muskweed ( <i>Myagrum perfoliatum</i> )	186
Table W14.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage paradoxa grass ( <i>Phalaris paradoxa</i> )	188
Table W15.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage silver grass ( <i>Vulpia</i> spp.)	191
Table W16.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage sweet summer grass ( <i>Brachiaria eruciformis</i> )	195
Table W17.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage turnip weed ( <i>Rapistrum rugosum</i> )	197
Table W18.1	AWB Ltd tolerance levels for wild oats contamination in 2005	200
Table W18.2	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage wild oats ( <i>Avena</i> spp.)	200
Table W19.1	Effect on wheat yields of early and late spraying of wild radish in central west of New South Wales	203
Table W19.2	Effect of wild radish population on crop yield reduction	203
Table W19.3	Percentages of wild radish seed remaining viable after burial at various depths	205
Table W19.4	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage wild radish ( <i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i> )	206
Table W20.1	Tactics that should be considered when developing an integrated plan to manage wireweed ( <i>Polygonum</i> spp.)	209

## List of figures

Figure HR1	Rare genes for herbicide resistance may pre-exist in a weed population. The proportion of resistant to susceptible weeds will change under selection pressure	13
Figure HR2	The impact of repeated selection pressure (repeated application of herbicides with the same MOA) on herbicide resistance status (the proportion of plants susceptible or resistant to the herbicide)	13
Figure A1.1	The effect of previous break crops on the level of crown rot in spring wheat at Tamworth, New South Wales	34
Figure A1.2	Development of ground cover through the 2004 season for various break crops	35
Figure A2.1	The impact of sowing rate (kg/ha) and row spacing (mm) on annual ryegrass head counts	41
Figure A2.2	Predicted effect of sowing date on yield of a medium season wheat at Tamworth, New South Wales (WheatCropper®)	43
Figure A2.3	Predicted effect of sowing date on yield of chickpeas at Tamworth, New South Wales (WheatCropper®)	43

Figure T1.2-1	Effect of landscape position (distance from fenceline) and environment type on seed removal from seed caches (small piles of seed)	62
Figure T1.3-1	The effect of three tillage treatments – full-cut cultivation, no-till and mouldboard ploughing in 2002 only – on the yield of barley over 2 years (2002 and 2003) at Katanning (mean of four replicates)	63
Figure T1.4-1	Percentage cumulative emergence of paradoxa grass seedlings from cultivated field plot (solid line) and undisturbed plot (dotted line) over 2 years after sowing in 1997	66
Figure T1.4-2	The number of tickled (cultivated) and uncultivated wild radish seedlings emerging per year at Mount Barker, Western Australia	67
Figure T1.5-1	Comparison of delayed sowing vs normal sowing time and the impact of autumn tickling (with follow-up knockdown herbicides used prior to sowing) on reductions in annual ryegrass seedlings in-crop 3 weeks after sowing, Wongan Hills, Western Australia	69
Figure T2.1-1	Burial of common sowthistle seed under different tillage treatments. The conventional tillage treatment is a disc plough followed by a chisel plough	72
Figure T2.2a-1	Declining price of glyphosate in Australia since its release in 1980	78
Figure T2.2a-2	Effect of meteorological conditions on the risk of spray loss over an average 24 hours at Moree, New South Wales, during 2003	79
Figure T2.2c-1	Variation in turnip weed control levels with chlorsulfuron is highly dependent on soil type and soil pH	84
Figure T2.2c-2	Effect of soil pH on the persistence of chlorsulfuron in Queensland soils	84
Figure T2.2c-3	Diagrammatic representation of the effect of soil moisture conditions on uptake of herbicide through the roots, contrasting dry soil conditions and normal soil conditions	85
Figure T2.2c-4	Effect of soil temperature on persistence of chlorsulfuron in Queensland	85
Figure T2.2d-1	Effect of time of removal of wild oats (using selective post-emergent herbicide) on wheat (cv Gamut) yield over 2 years at Tamworth, northern New South Wales	87
Figure T2.2d-2	Effect of wheat and barley population and herbicide rate on the dry matter production of turnip weed and black bindweed at crop anthesis	88
Figure T2.2d-3	Effect of crop type and herbicide rate on paradoxa grass seed production	88
Figure T2.2d-4	Effect of air temperature on spray coverage	89
Figure T2.2d-5	Effect of different adjuvants on the control of lucerne by a sublethal rate of 2,4-D d.m.a.	89
Figure T2.3-1	The effect of plant population and row spacing on the dry matter production of sowthistle	92
Figure T3.2-1	The effect on growth stage of vulpia at time of spray-topping with paraquat 250 and Roundup CT on the regeneration of vulpia	113
Figure T3.2-2	The effect of spray-topping on barley grass seed-set control using paraquat and glyphosate	113
Figure T3.2-3	Saffron thistle control, after spray-topping, at various growth stages. Spray-topping used paraquat 250 at 400 mL/ha and BS1000 at 60 mL/100	114
Figure T3.5-1	Timeline for the implementation of tactics for management of annual grass weeds in pastures	126
Figure T5.1-1	A pictorial description of modelling the impact of contamination with herbicide resistant seed	136
Figure W1.1	Mature annual ryegrass plant	149
Figure W1.2	Annual ryegrass seedling	150
Figure W2.1	Mature barley grass plant	153
Figure W2.2	Barley grass seedling	153
Figure W2.3	Mature barley grass fruit of (a) <i>H. leporinum</i> and (b) <i>H. marinum</i>	154
Figure W3.1	<i>E. colona</i> inflorescence	158
Figure W3.2	Mature inflorescence of <i>E. colona</i>	158
Figure W3.3	Barnyard grass seedling	158

Figure W4.1	Mature black bindweed plant	161
Figure W4.2	Black bindweed seedling	162
Figure W5.1	Mature narrow leaf bladder ketmia plant	164
Figure W5.2	Narrow leaf bladder ketmia seedling	164
Figure W5.3	Wide leaf bladder ketmia plant	165
Figure W5.4	Wide leaf bladder ketmia flower	165
Figure W6.1	Mature brome grass plant	166
Figure W6.2	Brome grass seedling	167
Figure W7.1	Mature capeweed plant	170
Figure W7.2	Capeweed seedling	170
Figure W8.1	Mature common sowthistle plant	173
Figure W8.2	Common sowthistle seedling	174
Figure W9.1	Flowers and achenes (seeds) of doublegee	176
Figure W9.2	Doublegee seedling	176
Figure W10.1	Mature Canadian, tall and flaxleaf fleabane (L to R)	178
Figure W10.2	Fleabane seedling	179
Figure W10.3	Seed production by fleabane	179
Figure W11.1	Mature Indian hedge mustard plant	181
Figure W11.2	Indian hedge mustard seedling	181
Figure W12.1	Mature liverseed grass	183
Figure W12.2	Liverseed grass seedling	183
Figure W13.1	Mature muskweed plant	185
Figure W13.2	Muskweed seedling	185
Figure W13.3	Flowers, pods of muskweed	185
Figure W14.1	Mature paradoxa grass	187
Figure W14.2	Paradoxa grass seedling	187
Figure W14.3	Inflorescence of paradoxa grass	188
Figure W15.1	Mature silver grass plant	190
Figure W16.1	Mature sweet summer grass plant	193
Figure W16.2	Sweet summer grass seedling	193
Figure W17.1	Mature turnip weed plant	196
Figure W17.2	Turnip weed seedling	196
Figure W17.3	Turnip weed ( <i>Rapistrum rugosum</i> ) and charlock ( <i>Sinapis arvensis</i> ) are often confused. Note that charlock (right) has no petiole	197
Figure W18.1	Mature wild oat plant	199
Figure W18.2	Wild oat seedling	199
Figure W19.1	Wild radish: (A) rosette stage; (B) plant at early flowering; (C) plant with mature pods; (D) dry pods with pod segments	202
Figure W19.2	Wild radish seedling	203
Figure W19.3	Wild radish infesting a conventional canola crop	205
Figure W20.1	Mature wireweed plant	208
Figure W20.2	Wireweed seedling	208

## Key findings

### Section 1: Economic benefits of adopting IWM

#### The economic benefits of adopting integrated weed management

##### *Key finding #1*

Weed seed carryover in the soil seedbank has a huge impact on returns in future years.

##### *Key finding #2*

Calculating returns over the long term (eg 10 years) is the best approach for determining the value of the economic benefits of IWM.

#### Estimating the economic benefits and costs of IWM

##### *Key finding #1*

Herbicides are the most cost-effective weed management option, providing the most reliable weed control.

#### Estimating the economic benefits of IWM using simulation models

##### Simulation model 1: Dynamic optimisation model

##### *Key finding #1*

The dynamic optimisation model (with a limited number of IWM tactics included) suggests that including non-chemical IWM options has economic value only for the 'with resistance' case.

##### Simulation model 2: Combining a range of IWM tactics targeting annual ryegrass

##### *Key finding #1*

A strategy which integrated six different tactics provided the highest net present value according to the simulation model developed by Schmidt and Pannell (1996).

##### *Key finding #2*

Growers who wish to remain in a continuous cropping system must include a wide range of weed control methods as no single method provides the optimal solution.

##### Simulation model 3: RIM model – herbicide resistance, annual ryegrass and IWM

##### *Key finding #1*

The benefits of IWM extend beyond herbicide resistance management, also applying to the case of long-term weed population management.

##### Simulation model 4: Multi-species (annual ryegrass and wild radish) RIM model

##### *Key finding #1*

The most promising of the strategies examined appeared to be 3 years of pasture ('phase farming' in Western Australia) rather than the more commonly practised 1 year of pasture between crops.

##### Simulation model 5: Multi-species (annual ryegrass and wild radish) RIM model and GM glyphosate-resistant canola crop

##### *Key finding #1*

The value of glyphosate-resistant canola as a break crop to manage weeds is significantly higher than that of triazine-resistant canola, which currently dominates Western Australian plantings.

##### *Key finding #2*

The glyphosate-resistant canola technology package needs to be highly effective in order for its use to be justified in the management of annual ryegrass and wild radish infestations.

## Simulation model 6: WeedRisk model – inclusion of variability and uncertainty

### Key finding #1

Given that IWM aims to spread the risk of control failure and increase the probability of success, and because integrated weed control options are mutually supportive, ignoring risk may undervalue some control practices.

### Key finding #2

IWM options that target the seedbank recruitment stage of the weed life cycle (Tactic Group 3) had the greatest impact in terms of reducing the size of seedbanks.

### Key finding #3

The benefit of the IWM scenario was largely attributable to options that reduced replenishment of the seedbank (eg crop-topping, selective spray-topping) as they were able to compensate for years of failure of post-emergent herbicides due to adverse seasonal conditions.

### Key finding #4

The economic returns averaged over a 20-year period for IWM are greater than for non-IWM in all cases, usually by a considerable margin, primarily due to lower seedbank numbers in IWM systems.

## Key benefits and practicalities

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### Section 3: Agronomy to enhance the implementation and benefits of weed management tactics

#### Agronomy 1 Crop choice and sequence

##### Crop sequencing to minimise soil- and stubble-borne disease and nematodes

###### Key benefit

#1 Crops with dense canopies act as more effective break crops.

###### Key practicalities

- #1 Selecting sound crop sequences and varieties to deal with the significant pathogens and nematodes of the paddock in question is good management.
- #2 Weeds are alternate hosts to some pathogens. Effective integrated weed management (IWM) during the fallow and in-crop can reduce disease pressure.
- #3 *Rhizoctonia* can affect seedling crop growth, leaving the crop at greater threat from weed competition.
- #4 Weeds can increase moisture stress within a wheat crop, exacerbating yield loss from crown rot.

#### Agronomy 2 Improving crop competition

##### Crop type

###### Key benefit

#1 A competitive crop improves weed control by reducing weed biomass and seed-set.

##### Sowing rate

###### Key benefits

- #1 High crop sowing rates reduce weed biomass and weed seed production.
- #2 Crop yield and grain quality may improve with increased sowing rates while benefiting weed control.

###### Key practicality

#1 If using higher sowing rates to improve competitive ability of a crop, remember to optimise the sowing rate for grain yield and quality potential.

**Row spacing***Key benefit*

- #1 Increasing crop density increases weed suppression. In cereals higher crop densities can achieve further suppression if narrower row spacings are used.

*Key practicality*

- #1 It is important to match row spacing and sowing rate to obtain crop plant densities that are optimal for both yield and competition against weeds.

**Sowing depth***Key benefit*

- #1 Sowing depth can be used to enhance crop competitive ability.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Use furrow sowing or moisture seeking techniques at sowing to establish the crop before the weeds.
- #2 Take care to sow seed at optimum depth.

**Sowing time***Key benefit*

- #1 Sowing at the recommended time for the crop type and variety will maximise the competitive ability of the crop, which will in turn will reduce weed biomass and seed-set.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 When using delayed sowing to allow for control of the first germination of weeds, choose the crop type and variety most suited to later sowing to minimise yield loss.
- #2 Sow problem weedy paddocks last to allow a good weed germination and subsequent kill prior to sowing.

**Soil properties***Key benefit*

- #1 Matching the crop (and variety) to the soil type can improve crop vigour and biomass production, which in turn will optimise crop competitive ability.

**Fertiliser use and placement***Key benefit*

- #1 Matching fertiliser inputs of both macro- and micro nutrients to crop target yield and quality will maximise the crop's competitive ability against weeds.

*Key practicality*

- #1 Fertiliser placement can improve crop growth, yield and competitive ability.

**Disease and insect management***Key benefit*

- #1 Preventing and/or controlling crop disease and insect damage maximises crop health and competitive ability, avoiding blow-outs in weed seed production.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Monitor crop health and control pests and diseases.
- #2 Areas of crop death (or weakness) become a haven for weeds to proliferate.

**Agronomy 3 Herbicide tolerant crops***Key benefit*

- #1 Herbicide tolerant crops provide additional crop choice, enabling implementation of alternative weed management tactics to target specific weeds while maintaining crop sequences.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Always use HT crops within an IWM framework.
- #2 Ensure the user is aware of, and adheres to, stewardship agreement restrictions placed on the 'frequency of use' of herbicides within MOA groups.
- #3 Always control HT crop volunteers in the following season, and minimise the risk of spread of HT crop seed.
- #4 Adhere to all herbicide label directions.
- #5 Good paddock management records must be kept and referred to. Mistakes are costly if a herbicide is applied to the wrong crop.
- #6 Use agronomic practices to minimise out-crossing (hybridisation) from canola.
- #7 Use agronomic practices to minimise out-crossing in wheat

**Agronomy 4 Improving pasture competition***Key benefits*

- #1 Dense stands of well-adapted pasture species compete against weeds, reducing weed numbers and weed seed-set.
- #2 Competitive pastures greatly improve the effectiveness of other tactics used to manage weeds in the pasture phase.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Select species and varieties to suit your conditions.
- #2 Once a pasture gets below a threshold density for a desirable pasture species it should be manipulated to build up seed reserves, or reseeded with improved cultivars.
- #3 Mixtures of pasture species will add diversity to the pasture base and improve the capacity for desirable plants to fill gaps created by disturbance (eg drought, cropping).

**Agronomy 5 Fallow phase***Key benefits*

- #1 A fallow period on its own, or in sequence with a number of crops, can be highly effective in reducing weed seed numbers in the soil seedbank.
- #2 A fallow period can incorporate a number of tactics to reduce weed seedling and seedbank numbers.
- #3 With forward planning, knockdown herbicides (paraquat and glyphosate) can be rotated to reduce the risk of resistant weeds.
- #4 Under carefully planned conditions, it is possible to use other herbicide MOA groups (Groups C or B).
- #5 In a fallow phase it is easier to judge the efficacy of a weed control tactic as there should be no surviving weeds.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Control weeds of fallows when they are small.
- #2 Avoid over-reliance on cultivation.
- #3 Rotate herbicide MOA groups.
- #4 Residual herbicides may be used for managing fallow weeds.
- #5 Avoid cultivating wet soil.

**Agronomy 6 Controlled traffic or tramlining for optimal herbicide application***Key benefits*

- #1 Accurately spaced tramlines provide guidance and a firmer pathway for more timely and accurate application of herbicide, improving weed control and reducing input costs.
- #2 Precision guidance in wide-row cropping systems adds to the benefits of tramlines with new physical and chemical weed management options.
- #3 Complete controlled traffic farming avoids all wheel compaction of the crop zone, resulting in a more competitive crop.

*Key practicality*

- #1 Tramlines can be installed relatively cheaply, with benefits gained from accuracy.

## Section 4: Tactics for managing weed populations

### Tactic Group 1 Deplete weed seed in the target area soil seedbank

#### Tactic 1.1 Burning residues

##### *Key benefits*

- #1 Burning can reduce viable weed seed numbers in the seedbank.
- #2 Late autumn burning of crop residues can kill weed seedlings.
- #3 Combining burning with other tactics (eg seed collection or narrow header trails) will increase the overall weed control impact.
- #4 Burning can stimulate weed germination of some weed species for subsequent control with another tactic.
- #5 Burning removes residues and thereby allows more effective incorporation of pre-emergent herbicides.

##### *Key practicalities*

- #1 Best success will be achieved by a high temperature burn, accounting for seasonal risks.
- #2 Prepare for the burn to ensure best placement of seeds.
- #3 Time burning to suit residue conditions and legislative limitations.
- #4 The impact of burning depends on residue placement and quantity.
- #5 Burning is not a suitable tool for the management of all weed species.

#### Tactic 1.2 Encouraging insect predation of seed

##### *Key benefit*

- #1 Insect predation of annual ryegrass can reduce seedbank numbers.

##### *Key practicalities*

- #1 Predation levels tend to be higher in locations in close proximity to 'refuge'.
- #2 Predation can be maximised by avoiding the overuse of broad spectrum insecticides.
- #3 Manage stubble according to the type of seed predator present.
- #4 Minimum tillage improves predation of weed seeds.
- #5 Soil disturbance over summer reduces seed predation.

#### Tactic 1.3 Inversion ploughing

##### *Key benefit*

- #1 In suitable soil types, weed seed burial is an effective method of killing weed seeds.

##### *Key practicalities*

- #1 Inversion ploughing of windrows will reduce weed numbers with minimal paddock disturbance, but weed seeds will remain in the inter-windrow area.
- #2 Appropriate soil type is needed for effective soil inversion.
- #3 Soil inversion is most effective in reducing seedbank numbers of weeds with limited dormancy.
- #4 Occasional inversion ploughing is unlikely to be deleterious to soil structure.
- #5 Careful timing of inversion ploughing will reduce the risk of wind and water erosion.

#### Tactic 1.4 Autumn tickle

##### *Key benefit*

- #1 A well timed autumn tickle will promote earlier and more uniform germination of some weed species for subsequent control.

##### *Key practicalities*

- #1 Autumn tickle should be used in conjunction with another tactic.
- #2 Success of autumn tickling depends on environmental conditions before and after implementation.
- #3 Soil type is critical for a successful autumn tickle.
- #4 Use autumn tickling in non-crop situations to stimulate germination of weeds which can then be managed with grazing or a non-selective herbicide.
- #5 The efficacy of autumn tickle will vary with weed species.

## Tactic 1.5 Delayed sowing

### Key benefits

- #1 Delayed sowing can dramatically reduce early crop competition and deplete the weed seedbank.
- #2 Delayed sowing is very effective when used in conjunction with additional weed management tactics.

### Key practicalities

- #1 Target problem paddocks first.
- #2 When planning to delay sowing in a problem paddock choose a crop or variety that is suited to later sowing to reduce the risk of yield loss.
- #3 Seasonal conditions will influence delayed sowing opportunities.

## Tactic Group 2 Kill weed(s) (seedlings) in the target area

### Tactic 2.1 Fallow and pre-sowing cultivation

#### Key benefits

- #1 Well-timed cultivation effectively kills weeds.
- #2 In preparing a seedbed, cultivation provides a weed-free environment for the emerging crop.
- #3 Cultivation can control weeds in situations where herbicides are ineffective or not an option.
- #4 Pre-sowing cultivation or full disturbance cultivation at sowing reduces the reliance on knockdown herbicides and therefore the likelihood of weed populations developing herbicide resistance.

#### Key practicalities

- #1 Strategic cultivation must take into account whole-farm practicalities.
- #2 Maintain soil structure by cultivating at suitable soil moisture levels and appropriate implement ground speed.
- #3 The tillage implement used will influence the level of soil disturbance and thereby the effect on the weeds present.
- #4 Choice of cultivation practice can influence weed density and spectrum.

### Tactic 2.2a Knockdown (non-selective) herbicides for fallow and pre-sowing control

#### Key benefits

- #1 Knockdown herbicides are effective.
- #2 Knockdown herbicides are cost-effective.
- #3 Use of knockdown herbicides can improve the timeliness of sowing.

#### Key practicalities

- #1 Consider the suitability of knockdown herbicides for fallow or pre-sowing weed control by assessing environmental conditions.
- #2 Stressed weeds will not be adequately controlled by knockdown herbicides.
- #3 Overuse of a knockdown herbicide will select for weed populations that are resistant to that particular herbicide.
- #4 Suitable meteorological conditions for spraying can be limited, especially in summer.

### Tactic 2.2b Double knockdown or 'double knock'

#### Key benefits

- #1 Double knockdown delays or prevents the development of glyphosate resistance.
- #2 Using a double knockdown or 'double knock' strategy reduces the number of glyphosate resistant weeds to be controlled in-crop.
- #3 Excellent weed seedling control is obtained by using a pre-sowing double knockdown.

#### Key practicalities

- #1 Glyphosate should be applied first, followed by paraquat or paraquat/diquat.
- #2 The time between applications will vary with the main target species.
- #3 Identify the weed species being targeted.
- #4 Apply the first herbicide when the weeds are most likely to be killed.
- #5 Double knockdown is more expensive than a single herbicide application.
- #6 Seasonal conditions will influence the scale of on-farm implementation.

**Tactic 2.2c Pre-emergent herbicides***Key benefit*

- #1 The residual activity of a pre-emergent herbicide controls the first few flushes of germinating weeds (cohorts) while the crop or pasture is too small to compete.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Good planning is needed to use pre-emergent herbicides as an effective tactic.
- #2 Soil characteristics and environmental conditions at the time of application play an important role in the availability, activity and persistence of pre-emergent herbicides.
- #3 Both the positive and negative aspects of using pre-emergent herbicides should be considered in the planning phase (Table T2.2c)

**Tactic 2.2d Selective post-emergent herbicides***Key benefits*

- #1 Post-emergent herbicides give high levels of target weed control with the additional benefit of improved crop or pasture yield.
- #2 Observations made just prior to application allow fine-tuning of herbicide selection to match target weeds present in the paddock.
- #3 Timing of application can be flexible to suit weed size, crop growth stage and environmental conditions.
- #4 Some post-emergent herbicides have pre-emergent activity on subsequent weed germinations.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Use careful consideration when selecting the best post-emergent herbicide to use in any one situation.
- #2 Application of post-emergent herbicides to stressed crops and weeds can result in reduced levels of weed control and increased crop damage.
- #3 Crop competition is important for effective weed control using selective post-emergent herbicides.
- #4 The technique used for application of selective post-emergent herbicides must be suited to the situation in order to optimise control.
- #5 Always use correct adjuvant to ensure effective weed control.
- #6 Selective post-emergent herbicides applied early and used as a stand-alone tactic have little impact on weed seedbanks.
- #7 Choose the most suitable formulation of herbicide for each particular situation.
- #8 The effectiveness of selective post-emergent herbicides is influenced by a range of plant and environmental factors.
- #9 Match herbicide mode of action to its use.

**Tactic 2.3 Weed control in wide-row cropping***Key benefits*

- #1 Increasing row spacing allows improved weed control while maintaining or improving crop yield.
- #2 Cropping in wide rows enables the use of shielded inter-row herbicide application, crop-row band spraying and inter-row cultivation for in-crop weed control.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Reduced competition from the crop can result in lower yield potential if weeds are not controlled.
- #2 A change to wide rows will require modifications to sowing equipment, a complete change in equipment or use of a contractor.
- #3 Precision farming technologies fit well with wide rows for weed management.

**Tactic 2.3a Inter-row shielded spraying and crop-row band spraying***Key benefits*

- #1 Shielded spraying allows inter-row application of non-selective herbicides in-crop, which can increase crop yield.
- #2 Band spraying reduces the risk of herbicide resistance development by limiting the application of higher risk selective herbicides over the crop row.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Herbicide MOA groups need to be rotated.
- #2 Timing of shielded spraying is important.
- #3 Care must be taken with the set-up and operation of shielded sprayers to minimise spray drift. All shields leak spray drift to some extent.

**Tactic 2.3b Inter-row cultivation***Key benefit*

- #1 Inter-row cultivation gives the opportunity to control weeds without herbicides.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Timing of inter-row cultivation is critical to ensure maximum levels of weed control.
- #2 Weed control is reduced if the soil is too wet.
- #3 Heavy stubble cover may preclude the use of inter-row cultivation.
- #4 Inter-row cultivation does not control weeds in the crop row, so an additional tactic must be used for the crop-row weeds.
- #5 Inter-row cultivation cannot be used in conjunction with ground covering stubble mulch techniques.
- #6 Inter-row cultivation can stimulate emergence of some weed species.

**Tactic 2.4 Spot spraying, chipping, hand rouging and wiper technologies***Key benefit*

- #1 Vigilance and attention to detail can be the difference between eradication and a prolonged and costly problem.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Instigate accurate future monitoring by marking isolated infestations.
- #2 Isolate the area of infestation to reduce the risk of further spread.
- #3 Control of new weed infestations and low-density weed populations requires only simple measures.
- #4 Timing of control is important to avoid seed-set.

**Tactic 2.5 Biological control***Key benefits*

- #1 Biological control agents can be effectively used to control weeds.
- #2 When classical biological control is successful it is very cost-effective.
- #3 The recognised potential of bioherbicides as an effective form of weed control stimulates future investigation.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Weed biology factors influence biological control efficacy.
- #2 Survival of the control agent relies on survival of the weed.
- #3 The success of the tactic is dependent on the existence of suitable agents and their degree of host specificity.
- #4 Bioherbicide technology is limited in terms of the cost of production and the need for a large-scale market to make the product viable.

**TG 3 Stop weed seed-set****Tactic 3.1 In-crop weed management for seed-set control***Key benefits*

- #1 The use of in-crop weed seed-set control tactics can dramatically reduce future expenditure on weed management.
- #2 In-crop seed-set control reduces levels of weed seed contamination in grain samples at harvest.

*Key practicality*

- #1 Plan weed seed-set management in advance.

**Tactic 3.1a Spray-topping with selective herbicides***Key benefits*

- #1 Correctly executed selective spray-topping will result in a 90% reduction in weed seed-set.
- #2 Selective spray-topping can effectively and economically minimise seed-set where weed population is low.
- #3 In high weed population situations selective spray-topping is an effective 'mop-up' tactic used to minimise seed-set of weeds that escape TG2 or earlier controls.
- #4 Selective spray-topping can be used as a salvage treatment.
- #5 Wild oat populations resistant to selective Group A and/or B herbicides can be managed using selective spray-topping.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Timing of application is the key to successful reduction in weed seed-set.
- #2 Selective herbicides are best used in combination with tactics from alternative tactic groups to avoid development of resistance to the selective spray-topping herbicide.
- #3 Weeds will not necessarily be killed by selective spray-topping but the growth and development of plants and subsequent seed-set will be seriously impeded.

**Tactic 3.1b Crop-topping with non-selective herbicides***Key benefits*

- #1 Crop-topping can reduce annual ryegrass weed seed-set, reducing additions to the seedbank.
- #2 Reductions in seed-set achieved by crop-topping can be increased if used in conjunction with selective herbicide treatment.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 The ideal time for crop-topping is when the annual ryegrass is at or just past flowering and the pulse crop is as mature as possible.
- #2 Crop-topping should not be performed on crops where the grain is intended for use as seed or for sprouting.
- #3 Crop-topping for wild radish and other brassica weed control in current pulse varieties is not recommended because of the closely matched rate of development of weed and crop.

**Tactic 3.1c Wiper technology***Key benefits*

- #1 Weed wiping is selective due to the application method rather than the herbicide used.
- #2 Weed wiping is an effective method of reducing seed-set in weeds which have not been controlled by tactics used earlier in the growing season.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Care is needed to ensure that excess herbicide does not drip onto the crop and cause damage.
- #2 Timing of weed wiping is the key.
- #3 A special applicator is required for weed wiping.

**Tactic 3.1d Crop desiccation and windrowing***Key benefits*

- #1 Windrowing used in conjunction with other tactics can greatly enhance weed control results.
- #2 There is a 'chance' that crop desiccation or windrowing will reduce weed seed-set.
- #3 Windrowing or desiccation can assist the management of late germinating weeds.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Timing is the key to maximum yield and quality.
- #2 Weed and crop regrowth (post-windrowing) must be controlled to stop seed-set.
- #3 Weeds/tillers below cutting height will not be incorporated into the windrow.
- #4 Check herbicide labels.
- #5 Windrowing in hot weather can increase losses due to shattering.

**Tactic 3.2 Pasture spray-topping***Key benefits*

- #1 Strategically timed spray-topping significantly reduces weed seed-set in pastures.
- #2 Both paraquat and glyphosate can be used for spray-topping.
- #3 Spray-topping is a very cost-effective tactic to reduce weed seed-set, thereby reducing the weed seedbank.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 The timing of herbicide application is critical to the success of spray-topping.
- #2 Spray-topping is not an alternative to fallow spraying.
- #3 Spray-topping as a lone tactic cannot control a wide range of grass species simultaneously.
- #4 Grass weed levels determine the management 'fit' of spray-topping in a pasture phase.
- #5 Winter cleaning or fallow spraying may be used to finalise the pasture phase before cropping commences.
- #6 Spray-topping can reduce seed-set in annual pasture legumes if the stage of development of the legume pasture coincides with the development stage of the target annual grass.

**Tactic 3.3 Silage and hay – crops and pastures***Key benefit*

- #1 Hay and silage are options that can be used in crops and pastures where excessive numbers of weeds have survived a previous tactic.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Carefully consider the options for marketing or using the product on-farm.
- #2 Time the hay or silage tactic in accordance with the physiological development of the target weed.
- #3 Understand the biological traits of the target weed to improve efficacy of the tactic.
- #4 Regrowth can produce enough seed to keep the seedbank topped up.
- #5 Consider the balance of using hay or silage as a weed management tactic with other farm enterprises.

**Tactic 3.4 Renovation crops and pastures – green manuring, brown manuring, mulching and hay freezing***Key benefits*

- #1 Manuring, mulching, and/or hay freezing (all with re-growth control) reduce viable seed-set, thereby controlling high weed numbers and managing herbicide resistant weeds.
- #2 Costs (income loss) from the renovation crop tactic can be offset by improved yield in subsequent cereal crops.
- #3 Patches of weeds in crops can be treated prior to hectic harvest time.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Manuring must be carefully timed to prevent seed-set and addition to the seedbank.
- #2 Choice of renovation crop species will influence the competitiveness of the renovation crop.
- #3 Economics in the year of manuring can be improved by planning the use of the tactic and by understanding and valuing subsequent benefits.
- #4 Ensure good coverage and penetration of herbicide, and observe withholding periods when brown manuring or hay freezing.
- #5 Maximise seed kill by ensuring even and optimum head emergence of target weed.
- #6 Monitor and manage regrowth.

**Tactic 3.5 Grazing – actively managing weeds in pastures***Key benefits*

- #1 Timed grazing pressure can be used to manipulate pasture composition.
- #2 Grazing can be used in conjunction with herbicides (spray-grazing) to effectively manage weeds.
- #3 Grazing can be used to reduce seed-set in grass weeds.
- #4 Exploiting differences in species acceptability to sheep can reduce weed numbers.
- #5 Tillering of annual grasses can be decreased by timely grazing.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Grazing pressure needs to be high enough to prevent selective grazing.
- #2 Timing of practices is critical to obtain the desired level of weed control.
- #3 Manage grazing to avoid the risk of livestock importing weeds or transporting them to other paddocks.
- #4 Livestock movement across paddocks can bury weed seeds.
- #5 High grazing pressure can increase the proportion of broadleaf weeds such as capeweed and erodium.

**TG 4 Prevent viable weed seeds within the target area being added to the soil seedbank****Tactic 4.1 Weed seed collection at harvest***Key benefit*

- #1 Residue and weed seed collection at harvest can prevent a large proportion of viable weed seed from entering the seedbank.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 The weed species has a major influence on the proportion of weed seed removed from the paddock when collected at harvest.
- #2 Timing of harvest will affect the amount of seed removed from the paddock when residue is collected.
- #3 Seed collection should be used in combination with tactics from other tactic groups to avoid selecting for weed types which avoid collection at harvest.
- #4 A strategy to dispose of chaff dumps or large quantities of baled straw must be implemented.
- #5 Seed collection can reduce the speed of harvest.
- #6 The initial economic outlay for machinery additions and modifications can be significant.

**Tactic 4.1a Narrow header trail***Key benefits*

- #1 Weed seed numbers can be reduced by using the narrow header trail tactic and burning the trails.
- #2 Windrowing improves the benefit of using narrow header trails.

*Key practicality*

- #1 Grazing stock tend to spread and bury seed, which will reduce the efficacy of burning the weed seeds in windrows.

**Tactic 4.1b Chaff cart***Key benefits*

- #1 Collecting crop residue with a chaff cart can significantly reduce the numbers of weed seeds returning to the seedbank.
- #2 Windrowing improves the benefit of using a chaff cart.
- #3 Reduces crop volunteers in the following season.

*Key practicality*

- #1 A crop must be harvested as soon as it is ripe to collect the greatest number of weed seeds.
- #2 Burning of chaff dumps is time consuming.
- #3 Dumps may smoulder, for up to 5 days, reducing air quality in the vicinity.

**Tactic 4.2 Grazing crop residues***Key benefits*

- #1 Grazing reduces the number of weed seeds added to the soil seedbank.
- #2 Grazing can be used to dispose of, and gain value from, weed seed contaminated fodder.

*Key practicalities*

- #1 Grazing livestock can distribute weed seeds across a paddock.
- #2 The impact of grazing on weed numbers in the seedbank is dependent on the biological features of the weed.
- #3 Livestock trampling tends to bury weed seed, which can decrease the efficiency of burning as a means of killing seeds. Depending on the weed species, burial may also increase germination rates.

## **TG 5 Prevent introduction of viable weed seed from external sources**

### **Tactic 5.1 On-farm hygiene**

#### *Key benefit*

- #1 Planning and enforcing a farm hygiene strategy minimises the risk of adding weeds to the seedbank from external sources.

#### **Tactic 5.1a Sow weed-free seed**

#### *Key benefit*

- #1 Weed seeds are not added to the seedbank unnecessarily.

#### *Key practicalities*

- #1 Check seed analysis before purchasing seed-lots to avoid importing weed seed.  
 #2 To reduce the spread of weeds, plan ahead and take due care when retaining seed on-farm for sowing.  
 #3 Keep good records of seed purchases.

#### **Tactic 5.1b Manage weeds in non-crop areas**

#### *Key benefit*

- #1 Weed management in non-crop areas can prevent 'creep effect' into crops.

#### *Key practicality*

- #1 Weeds from non-crop areas can impact greatly on farm weed status, but are often easily controlled.

#### **Tactic 5.1c Clean farm machinery and vehicles**

#### *Key benefit*

- #1 Good vehicle hygiene (ie regular cleaning) can reduce the risk of new infestations and weed spread.

#### *Key practicality*

- #1 Develop and adhere to a clean machinery and vehicle protocol aimed at reducing new additions to the weed seedbank.

#### **Tactic 5.1d Manage livestock feeding and movement**

#### *Key benefit*

- #1 Careful management of livestock will reduce the likelihood of new infestations and weed spread.

#### *Key practicality*

- #1 Quarantine contaminated fodder in a sacrifice paddock or feedlot so that weeds are contained in a small area.

## Introduction

Weeds are estimated to cost Australian agriculture between \$2.5 billion and \$4.5 billion per annum (Sinden et al 2005). For winter cropping systems alone the cost is \$1.3 billion (Jones and Medd 2005), equivalent to around 20% of the gross value of the Australian wheat crop. Consequently, any practice that can reduce the weed burden is likely to generate substantial economic benefits to growers and the grains industry.

Integrated weed management (IWM) is a system for managing weeds over the long term, particularly the management and minimisation of herbicide resistance (HR). Grain growers can no longer rely solely on selective herbicides for effective control of a number of weed species. There is a need to combine herbicide and non-herbicide methods into an integrated control program. Given that there are additional costs associated with implementing IWM, the main issues for growers are whether it is cost-effective to adopt the system, and whether the benefits are likely to be long-term or short-term in nature.

### Is integrated weed management cost-effective?

IWM is definitely cost-effective in the longer term. In the short term, many farms don't adopt IWM because of the added costs; however, research and farmer experience have shown that failure to adopt IWM leads to herbicide resistance.

In a survey of Western Australian grain growers Llewellyn et al (2004) identified that the adoption of IWM practices was associated with the HR status of a farm. Although farms without resistance also used IWM, practices were more likely to be used when HR was present. For example, IWM tactics such as crop-topping use was three times greater on farms with resistance than without. On average, farms with HR used a greater number of weed control practices (nine) than farms without HR (six). Thus, for Western Australian farming systems at least, the adoption of IWM is often an outcome of identification of HR.

There are a number of key factors that influence adoption of IWM (Llewellyn et al 2002; 2004; Pannell and Zilberman 2000):

- Expectation of new herbicide technology

Herbicides are regarded as having greater weed control efficacy than non-herbicide controls. Consequently, while current herbicides remain effective there is reduced incentive to adopt alternative control options. The development of HR indicates a reduction in the future effectiveness of herbicide options, and should increase the attractiveness of IWM. However, Llewellyn et al (2002) found that there is a high level of confidence, among Western Australian growers, that new herbicides with different modes of action will become available, thus reducing the incentive to adopt IWM.

These attitudes prevail despite there being no post-emergent herbicides with novel modes of action known to be in the latter stages of development for major crop weeds (annual ryegrass, wild radish and wild oats).

- Regression and mobility of resistance

Llewellyn et al (2002) surveyed growers' perceptions of HR regression (when herbicides are no longer used and the less fit resistant plants fail to maintain their proportion in the population) and HR mobility (via means such as pollen flow, seed movement, and contaminated seed and fodder).

The survey found that:

- up to 46% of growers perceived regression after 5 years to be likely
- nearly 14% thought it to be highly likely
- 54% of growers perceived importation of resistance after 10 years to be likely
- 21% believed it to be highly likely.

These perceptions are an indication that issues of reverse and mobile resistance, within and between farms, can potentially affect resistance management decisions.

Widderick et al (2006) found similar trends in a study of farmers and agronomists in the northern grains region (northern New South Wales and Queensland), where 30% of respondents thought HR lasted up to 5 years and a further 10% did not know.

- Efficacy of alternative IWM options

In the absence of herbicide resistance, post-emergent selective herbicides are perceived by growers as having the highest reliability and efficacy among available IWM options. In contrast, some 'traditional' control methods such as stubble burning and cultivation are regarded as having much lower efficacy and large variances. Although it is recognised that each control tactic has its own impact on weed mortality and/or seed-set, an increasing number of growers realise that very effective weed control can only be achieved with a targeted combination of a wide range of strategies. As control tactics are imposed at different times, their combined impacts are considered to be multiplicative rather than additive. For example, the combined effect of two control tactics each with 40% survival is 16% survival (Pannell et al 2004).

- Growers' attitudes to short-term profit versus long-term returns

IWM is widely regarded as providing a long-term approach to weed management, in which there are likely to be initial up-front costs to achieve longer term gains from reduced weed populations. In some circumstances growers may make suboptimal weed management decisions due to their specific planning objectives. For example, where there are short-term financial pressures (eg debt servicing requirements) growers may make decisions that increase current period profits but that may have negative long-term consequences (eg herbicide resistance).

Returns of an individual enterprise in the short term are usually measured through a gross margin budget, which is determined by factors such as crop yield, price, the costs of both herbicide and non-herbicide weed control, and other inputs such as seed and fertiliser. Crop yield is directly influenced by weed density, which itself is a function of weed control. For short-term decision making the goal of the grower managing a weed problem is to determine the optimal level of herbicide and non-herbicide inputs for a given weed density that will maximise the crop gross margin.

However, this approach to measuring returns from weed management ignores a critically important economic factor – the carryover of the weed seedbank and its impact on returns in future years.

A weed control decision not only has an impact on returns for the current crop, but affects yields in later years (for good or bad) due to its impact on the biological seed stock. Thus, calculating returns over the long term (eg 20 years) is a better approach for determining the value of the economic benefits of IWM.

A longer term approach is also able to account for important economic factors such as changes to weed seedbanks from one year to the next due to weed management actions and the impact of HR. The role of good agronomic practices such as more competitive crops, alternative crops in a rotation, and pasture phases should be valued along with weed management tactics.

The longer term view of weed management can be assisted by adopting the concept of Tactic Groups (see below). This approach coordinates weed control practices with the life cycle of weeds, and emphasises the need to avoid any practices which may add viable weed seeds to the seedbank.

### Management of weeds using tactic groups

*IWM in Australian cropping systems* approaches weed management in a novel manner by introducing the concept of Tactic Groups (TGs). This concept creates new options and opportunities for weed management and has been designed to change the focus of growers and advisors from crop yield to weed life cycle.

Individual weed management tactics are packaged into TGs according to the target growth stage of the weed. The TGs are based on the five key objectives of all weed control strategies (see table below):

Tactic group	Aim of tactic group
1	Deplete weed seed in the target area soil seedbank
2	Kill weed(s) (seedlings) in the target area
3	Stop weed seed-set
4	Prevent viable weed seeds within the target area being added to the soil seedbank
5	Prevent introduction of viable weed seed from external sources

In a well-integrated weed management plan each target weed will be 'attacked' by a number of tactics, each from a different TG. TGs should be combined in the same way herbicides from different mode-of-action (MOA) groups are rotated. Integrating TGs and MOA groups will reduce weed numbers, stop replenishment of the seedbank and minimise the risk of developing populations of HR weeds.

When selecting a tactic, consider the aim of the TG to which each tactic belongs, and evaluate the suitability of the activity to the target weed and the weed's growth stage. Some weed management tactics significantly reduce crop production or yield, producing a dramatic effect. Instead of excluding such tactics, consider the option of using them as a 'one-off' solution in problem situations. Tactics of this kind can be highly effective, reducing weed seedbank numbers by a huge proportion in a single year.

### Taking control of weed management

Significant or subtle changes in agronomy can enhance the impact of weed management tactics. Increases in sowing rate, adjustments to fertiliser application rate and changes in crop variety choice can significantly improve crop competition, which in turn improves weed control results. More substantial changes, such as choosing a different crop type, can enable the inclusion of additional tactics and expand the opportunities for highly effective weed control.

Most importantly, get out and have a look. Useful knowledge of the weed species in the target area includes population density, distribution across the paddock, growth cycle and the growth stages when the weeds are most vulnerable to weed management tactics. Knowing the problem to be faced is essential to solving the weed management dilemma.

### Contributors

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## The IWM Manual

The manual is divided into seven sections, to assist the reader make the development of an IWM plan a simple process.

<b>Section 1</b> Economic benefits	Outlines the economic benefits of IWM in Australian cropping systems using computer model simulations.
<b>Section 2</b> Herbicide resistance	A knowledge resource clarifying aspects of herbicide resistance in weed populations. It is crucial to understand the basics of herbicide resistance when managing weed populations that are resistant to one or more herbicide groups, or are at risk of becoming resistant.
<b>Section 3</b> Agronomy	Discusses a range of agronomic practices that can be used to enhance the results of the specific weed management tactics employed. It includes many simple and cost-effective management changes that can be made to improve the competitive ability of the crop.
<b>Section 4</b> Tactics	Provides detailed information on available weed management tactics and presents trial results from across Australia. The tactics, sorted by Tactic Group, are addressed individually. Where a tactic can fall into two Tactic Groups because it impacts on two stages of the weed's life cycle, it has been grouped according to its major aim.
<b>Section 5</b> Implementing IWM	The 'doing' part of the manual, outlining how best to assess the on-farm situation and implement the IWM plan on-farm. The information that should be collected for each paddock is listed, so that an effective weed management plan can be prepared.
<b>Section 6</b> Weeds	Details the characteristics of 20 key weeds of annual cropping across Australia. Information includes basic identification, distribution and traits that make the weed a significant problem in cropping systems. For each weed there is a recommendation of the most suited weed management tactics for control.
<b>Section 7</b> Case studies	Includes a number of grower case studies collected from across Australia. These are an invaluable resource highlighting how growers are actually implementing IWM. What made them change? What has been successful? What have been the challenges?