



**Niall Blair**

Minister for Primary Industries  
Minister for Regional Water  
Minister for Trade and Industry

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday, 21 August 2018

### **TACKLING THE NORTH-WEST'S PRICKLY PEST**

Reducing the spread of *Hudson Pear* is a top priority in the state's North West, with the NSW Government today announcing a new biocontrol agent to combat the devastating weed.

In collaboration with the Queensland and Federal Governments, the NSW Government has sourced a biological control agent – a cochineal insect (*Dactylopius tomentosus*) – to help control the noxious weed.

Minister for Primary Industries, Niall Blair said Hudson Pear is currently found in North-Western NSW and is impacting a number of farming properties across the region.

“If this pest continues to spread it could effectively wipe out the grazing potential of the area,” Mr Blair said.

“The spines of the plant are so vicious they also present a real threat to livestock and native wildlife which can be maimed and even killed through entanglement.

“The highly invasive weed is native to southern parts of the United States and Mexico and can grow up 1.5m high and 3m wide.

“It's extremely important we limit the spread of Hudson pear in order to protect our primary producers and the environment.”

The NSW Department of Primary Industries is currently mass rearing *Dactylopius tomentosus* in preparation to selectively introduce the insect to affected areas.

By feeding on the plant, particularly the stem, which detach and reshoot, the introduced insect reduces both the spread and vigor of the weed and ultimately kills it.

Mr Blair said the new control was particularly timely given the current drought conditions.

“The current drought is causing Hudson Pear to become more brittle and prone to breaking, which allows it to spread further and faster – the last thing any of our farmers need,” Mr Blair said.

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