

Weed Biosecurity Property Inspections

MidCoast Council undertakes routine private property inspections throughout the local government area to identify priority weed growth and provide assistance and information to landholders to help them comply with the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

Council undertakes these inspections to assist landholders with the identification and management of prioritised plant species. Without the help from landholders Council will lose the battle against the spread of invasive weeds in the community and the environment.

Weeds are predominantly plants that occur in environments outside of their natural distribution. Priority target weeds may be agricultural (where they compromise sustainable farming) or environmental. Environmental weeds invade and threaten natural ecosystems, where they compete with native flora for space, water, nutrients and light; water weeds choke waterways. Not only do environmental weeds reduce biodiversity by out-competing the native flora, they often alter and destroy habitat for native animals, and thereby harm our unique fauna.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can I be present during the inspection?

A. Yes. Not only do you have the right to be present during the inspection, wherever possible, Council encourages your attendance or that of your representative.

Q. How long will the inspection take?

A. This depends on how large the property is and how easy it is to access the property.

Q. Can I stop the inspection from taking place?

A. No, the inspection is required by law to be carried out. Council has suitably qualified staff who will conduct the inspection.

Q. What happens if I have priority weeds growing on my property?

A. After the inspection, a report, together with informative documentation and any action that may be required will be forwarded to the registered landowner/ratepayer/occupier. If required, a re-inspection will be scheduled to determine whether adequate control measures have been undertaken, to meet biosecurity requirements.

Q. What if I can't undertake the work required or need more time?

A. Council staff are available to confidentially discuss any issues you may have, and are there to be of assistance in dealing with weed related matters.

Q. What if I don't agree with the information on the report?

A. You should contact a Weeds Biosecurity Officer to discuss any concerns you have.

Q. What happens if my property is rented or leased?

A. You should notify your agent or the tenants that a property inspection is being programmed, or alternatively, you can call Council with the details so contact can be made with the tenants. Any final inspection report will be sent to the registered landowner/ratepayer unless the occupier is also entitled to a copy.

Q. What happens if my gate is locked and the inspection couldn't proceed?

A. An alternative inspection date will be scheduled. The Weeds Officer will attempt to contact you verbally and the property will be inspected on a separate occasion. Weed Biosecurity Officers are legally permitted to cut locks, but will only do this if the landowner refuses to co-operate. It is an offence to obstruct or hinder an Officer/Inspector trying to exercise a function of the Act.

Q. Is there any cost involved?

A. No, not for an initial inspection. A fee may be charged for any subsequent re-inspections where a land owner has failed to comply with weed control requirements given under the act. More specific information is available in Council's Fees and Charges.

Q. What if I don't clean up my weed problem?

A. Under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* "persons generally" have a biosecurity duty to ensure that any biosecurity risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised – so far as is reasonably practicable and proportionate to the priority of the threat. Heavy fines apply for offences committed under the Act.

Q. Where can I get information about the Biosecurity Act 2015?

A. *Biosecurity Act 2015* information can be found on NSW Department of Primary Industries website, www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact

Things you need to do on the day of the inspection:

- Be sure your dogs are securely tied up. This will assist the Officer to conduct the inspection safely. The Weeds Officer will approach a residential building to meet you first.
- Be sure all gates are unlocked so the Officer can gain access.
- Should you need to lock a gate for security reasons you will need to make arrangements prior to the inspection to have the gate unlocked, or the key to be left at an agreed collection point.

For further information, please contact your nearest MidCoast Council Weeds Biosecurity Officer on 6591 7222.