

Questions - April 24, 2007
BRANCHED BROOMRAPE

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): My question is to the minister responsible for Primary Industries and Resources.

1) Mr PEDERICK: Why are primary producers dealing with branched broomrape on their properties being asked to sign a legal contract (better known as the Branched Broomrape Eradication Program Grant Agreement) with the state government? Primary producers attracting branched broomrape eradication program grants of \$5 000 or more from the state government to spray herbicides for the management and control of branched broomrape on their properties are being asked to sign a legal contract with the state government—a contract that has not been consulted upon by the Branched Broomrape Ministerial Advisory Committee or the Branched Broomrape Community Focus Group.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Minister for Health): I take this question on behalf of the Minister for Environment and Conservation, who is responsible for managing this program. I would be very happy to get a response for the member in due course.

2) Mr PEDERICK: My question is again to the minister for Primary Industries and Resources. Why is there no record of which spray herbicide chemicals have been used for the eradication of branched broomrape under the Farm Plan Scheme?

The Hon. K.O. Foley: Is this the best you can do today?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEDERICK: Under the scheme, chemical herbicides, such as Broadstrike, Ally and Roundup, are used for spraying larger areas. Broadstrike and Ally are group B herbicides, meaning that they require moisture to break down. A record of which chemicals have been used is required, given that in these dry times they may not break down.

The Hon. J.D. HILL: Of course, branched broomrape is a very serious threat to agriculture in South Australia. That is why this government has invested an enormous amount of effort and energy into dealing with this issue.

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: The deputy leader says that it was a matter of the compact with Peter Lewis, the former member for that area, who raised this very vigorously in this house. I believe that both sides of the parliament supported him in that. I know that when the Hon. Rob Kerin was responsible for this part of policy, he was very concerned about this issue, as was I when I was the Minister for Environment and Conservation. I know that our current minister is concerned about it as well. A whole range of experiments is going on to try to work out the best way of dealing with this weed. I am happy to get a report for the member, in particular in relation to the issue he raises, but I am sure that, if he would like a more detailed briefing, officers from the minister's department would be happy to give it to him.

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In reply to **Mr PEDERICK** (24 April).

The Hon J.D. HILL: The Minister for Environment and Conservation has been advised:

1) The Program's Farm Plan Scheme allows landholders to work with contracted agronomists from Rural Solutions SA to develop individual plans for their infested paddocks that will work to prevent branched broomrape from emerging each year. Landholders go through an annual cycle of developing and then implementing plans which nominate the specific strategies (including herbicide sprays) that will be carried out on each paddock to prevent branched broomrape from emerging each year.

2) Due to the nature of the Farm Plan Scheme, plans are developed prior to work being undertaken and can be subject to variation depending on factors including seasonal conditions. In order to monitor the actual application of herbicides and consistent with normal industry practise, landowners are responsible for keeping their own spray records regarding the types of herbicides used.

To encourage this good practise, the Program is emphasising the need for adequate spray records, including the types of chemicals used, to be kept and produced as part of the annual audit process for the Farm Plan Scheme. Audits are carried out annually to determine what factors may need to be addressed prior to the next year's planning cycle and provide an indication of the types of herbicide chemicals that have actually been used by landholders to control branched broomrape in infested paddocks.