

## BE CAREFUL WITH FUSILADE®

The grass-selective herbicide Fusilade<sup>®</sup>, which contains the active ingredient fluazifop-p-butyl, has long been used as a blanket spray to control weed grasses within bushland. In WA, scientists at Kings Park and Botanic Gardens (KPBG) led the way with this use, conducting numerous trials to determine the effectiveness of the herbicide on the target weeds, combined with off-target effect on native species. Commercial sources claim that this herbicide is grass-selective, post-emergent, non-residual, has rapid breakdown and is active through foliar application only. But over the years, especially after the release of the stronger preparation Fusilade Forte™, KPBG staff began to wonder whether it wasn't having some residual effects, particularly on native seed germination. So they set up a study to try to find out\*. The results are disturbing.

It appears that both herbicides are residual, can be taken up through the soil and can have a negative effect on native seed germination. The stronger Fusilade Forte™ has greater effects. Given that in practical use, operators do not always follow the label recommendations as there is a common perception that 'if a little is good, then a bit more must be better', this could lead to disasters – and perhaps already has.

The authors conclude that use of Fusilade<sup>®</sup> may have left a 'negative legacy'. For example they state "Native seedling recruitment within our study ecosystem (previously exposed to Fusilade<sup>®</sup>) is limited following natural fire events. There may be several other causes, including seedbank decline through weed invasion and frequent fire events, but a potential contributory cause following herbicide application is now recognised." The authors recommend great care and more exact targeting when these herbicides are being used in bushland.

[\*For ref, contact Ed.]