



### Greetings,

“Beware the Ides of March” is a line from a Shakespeare play and we would be well served to treat the first month of autumn with respect. It has become abundantly clear that fire season boundaries have stretched well beyond the traditional 6 months and with late fires in the LEFPA area in November and Cape fires breaking out a month earlier than the start of their fire season, our valiant fire crews and pilots have barely time to draw

breath between the regional seasons. The limited fire suppression resources face the very real possibility of working in both regions simultaneously on a regular basis, leading to fatigue and a paucity of resources. We call upon LEFPA members to do their utmost to prepare for fires whatever the time of year, to ensure that everything possible has been done to reduce the risk of fire and to have on hand well maintained equipment. Until next time.

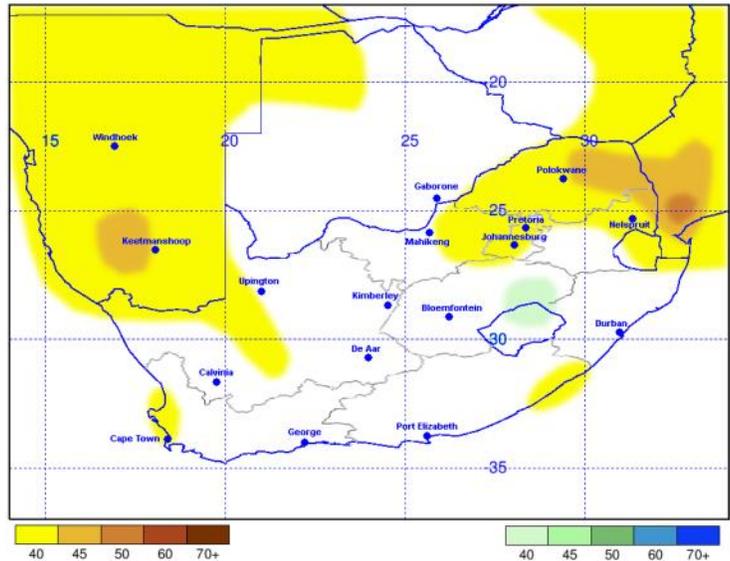
### 2019 Weer Voorspelling - Maart

Giel Hugo het vir ons die ses maande voorspelling 2019 Februarie tot Julie. Die neerslag vir Februarie, Maart en April 2019 hier onder.

Die kleur indikator wys geel tot bruin as droër as normaal en die groen tot blou natter as normaal. Persentasies word aangedui as persentasie moontlikheid dat 'n sekere toestand sal heers. Geel moet dan byvoorbeeld gesien word as 40% moontlikheid dat neerslag minder sal wees. Dit is nie 'n aanduiding van hoeveelheid nie maar persentasie moontlikheid. Verder sal die wit 'n aanduiding wees dat dit of meer of minder sal wees maar nie met groot afwyking nie. Die doel van hierdie kaart is om die "gevaar" areas aan te dui. Nie dat meer reën regtig "gevaar" is nie.

Met 'n dominante binnelandtrog sal die sentrale binneland relatief neutraal bly wat neerslag aan betref. Fronte wat te ver oos by die land uitkom sal reën in die suide bring maar nie baie nie terwyl die weskus droër as normaal sal wees. Namibië, Noordwes, Gauteng en Mpumalanga behoort ook droër as normaal te wees.

Die hoogdrukke lê steeds redelik ver suid en sal natter as normale weer oor die Drakensberge en oos Vrystaat bring.



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### Notice - Special General Meeting



A Special General Meeting will be held in the LEFPA Boardroom on Thursday 14th March at 10h00. The purpose of the SGM is to determine member rates for 2019 so as you can imagine, it is important that you are there.

Please do your best to attend and offer your input, thus ensuring that decisions made are ones that you've been involved in. LEFPA should reflect the wishes and interests of the majority of members and to do this, your involvement is key.

## An Environmental Bug

One of the most commonly seen invasive plants is bugweed, which springs up wherever we look. Johan Louw gives us the lowdown on this pesky invader.

**IAP Species:** *Solanum mauritianum*.

**Nemba Category:** 1b

**Common names:** bugtree, flannel weed, woolly nightshade (English); luisboom, groot bitterappel (Afrikaans); uBhoqo, umbanga banga (isiZulu).

**Origin:** South America.

### Description:

A shrub or small tree up to 4m high covered with whitish-felt like hairs. Dull green leaves that are velvety above and white-felty beneath which emit a strong smell when bruised. Purple flowers in compact, terminal clusters on densely felt like stalks up to 10cm long all year round. Spherical berries which begin green and turn yellow, in compact terminal clusters. Hairy leaves and stems are a respiratory tract and skin irritant. Unripe fruits are poisonous.

### Where in South Africa is it a problem?

Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Limpopo.

### How does it spread?

Seed dispersal.

### Why is it a problem?

*Solanum mauritianum* competes with and replaces indigenous riverine and forest margin species. It also competes with young trees in plantations, particularly pines and black wattle, inhibiting growth and causing stem deformation. It is a host of the KwaZulu-Natal fruit fly which is an economic pest. It has no fodder value and the plants are generally avoided by grazing animals. The unripe fruits are poisonous and the hairy leaves and stems can cause allergic dermatitis and asthma.

### Does the plant have any uses?

Ornamental use only and birds eat the fruits.

### Plant me instead alternatives:

Weeping sage (*Buddleja auriculata*), false olive (*Buddleja saligna*), sagewood (*Buddleja salviifolia*), large spurflower bush (*Plectranthus ecklonii*), healing-leaf tree (*Solanum giganteum*), wild medlar (*Vangueria infausta*).

### Planning:

Despite its ability to grow vigorously, it is easily controlled with herbicide and regular follow-ups are necessary. It is particularly important to control young or coppicing bugweed before it sets seed. Do not foliar spray in winter months as it will be ineffective; stump treatments should be used.

**Cut stump:** Best treatment for coppice or immature plants with stems <10cm (apply within 5mins).

**Frill:** For mature plants with stems >10cm.

**Foliar Spray:** Young plants and coppice less than chest height.

**Large plants in indigenous forest/thicket:** Kill standing with frill so as to facilitate forest succession.



Herbicide prescribed:	Trade Name	Rate:	Application Method
Imazapyr 100g/l SL	Chopper, Hatchet, Eco-Imazapyr	200ml in 10l of water	Cut stump/Frill
Triclopyr 360 g/l SL	Lumberjack Timbrel	300ml in 10l of water (include dye)	Cut stump/Frill
Floroxypyr/picloram 80/80 g/l ME	Plenum	25ml in 10l of water (include wetter and dye)	Foliar
Triclopyr 240 g/l EC	Ranger	100ml in 10l of water (include dye)	Foliar
Triclopyr 480 g/l EC	Garlon 4, Triclon, Viroaxe	50ml in 10l of water (include dye and wetter)	Foliar

### Biological control:

The bugweed flower bud-feeding weevil *Anthonomus santacruzi* occurs throughout the native range of *Solanum mauritianum* in South America.

Insects collected in Argentina were imported into quarantine in South Africa, tested for host-specificity and released on a number of bugweed infestations in 2008/2009.

### References

Henderson, L. 2001. Alien Weeds and Invasive Plants. ARC. Paarl Printers, Cape Town.

Invasive Species of South Africa. *Solanum mauritianum*. <http://invasives.org.za/component/k2/item/351-bugweed-solanum-mauritianum>.

Management of Invasive Alien Plants. <http://www.arc.agric.za/arc-ppri/Pages/Weeds%20Research/Fact-Sheets-on-Invasive-Alien-Plants-and-their-Biological-Control-Agents.aspx>.

# Droning On...

All *Fired Up* discussed the do's and don'ts of drone flying in the March 2018 issue but the aerial hazard caused by drone pilots is growing at a fast rate of knots. One would think that basic common sense and safety awareness would rule the airways but it's clear that the fun factor of flying your own 'eye in the sky' pushes this out of mind. We would like to draw your attention once again to the **LAW** regarding the flying of drones according to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

## Acceptable uses of drones are:

### For private use –

- (a) The drone may only be used for an individual's personal and private purposes where there is no commercial outcome, interest or gain;
- (b) The pilot must observe all statutory requirements relating to liability, privacy and any other laws enforceable by any other authorities.

### For all other use –

A drone must be registered and may only be operated in terms of Part 101 of the South African Civil Aviation Regulations.

## Dangers of negligent operation of a drone:

- (a) Collision with other aircraft, with possible fatal results;
- (b) Injury to the public;
- (c) Damage to people's property;
- (d) Legal liability for damages and losses incurred by third parties as a result of an incident caused by unlawful use of a drone, liability for contravening privacy laws or any other laws enforceable by authorities that may be applicable due to unlawful use of the drone.

## Do's and Don'ts of drone flying:

### DO

- Fly/operate drones in a safe manner, at all times.
- Drones should remain within the visual line of sight of the drone pilot at all times.
- Fly/operate the drone in daylight and clear weather conditions.
- Inspect your drone before each flight.



### DON'T

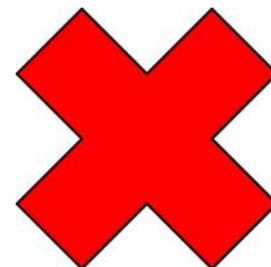
**DO NOT**, through act or omission, endanger the safety of another aircraft or person therein or any person or property through negligent flying/operation of a drone.

Do not fly/operate a drone 50 m or closer from:

- Any person or group of persons (like sports field, road races, schools, social events etc.);
- Any property without permission from the property owner.

Unless approved by the SACAA, DO NOT fly/operate a drone:

- Weighing more than 7 kg;
- 10 km or closer to an aerodrome (airport, helipad, airfield);
- Near manned aircraft;
- In controlled, restricted or prohibited airspace, which includes:
  - Near crime scenes, courts of law or prisons;
  - Near Power Stations;
  - Near National Key Points;
  - In any SANParks controlled National Park, such as Table Mountain National Park, Kruger National Park and all other National Parks



**Do not fly/operate drones 46m (150 feet) from the ground, unless approved by the Director of Civil Aviation of the SACAA.**

From LEFPA's point of view, our pilots fly under extremely difficult conditions as part of aerial firefighting. It is downright foolhardy and dangerous to fly a drone in the area of and above a fire, placing additional hazards in the pilots airspace.

**NOTE: The Director of Civil Aviation has designated an external organisation to oversee the operations of recreational aviation.**

More detailed information about the regulations regarding flying a drone can be found on the CAA website link:

[www.caa.co.za/Documents/RPAS/Part%20101%20-%20RPAS%20Workshops.pdf](http://www.caa.co.za/Documents/RPAS/Part%20101%20-%20RPAS%20Workshops.pdf)

In addition, the Lowvelder published an informative article: [www.lowvelder.co.za/456878/everything-must-know-flying-drone/](http://www.lowvelder.co.za/456878/everything-must-know-flying-drone/)

## Summer Runway Maintenance and Upkeep

The aerial firefighting fleet includes bombers which, unlike helicopters, can't lift water out of the closest dam but have to return to the nearest runway to recharge with water. Fires, of course, aren't obligingly placed close to a runway either!

Every year before the fire season commences, the runways are inspected by a vehicle before the first plane arrives for runway training of the pilot and loading crews. Once everyone is happy with the runway surface, the safety officer of each service provider flies in and certifies that the runway is serviceable for the coming season.

Important points to note:

- Runways should be mowed at least twice a month with a rotary tractor mower,
- This stimulates the grass to grow sideways and not form tufts that cause the runway surface to be uneven,
- Attention must be paid to the drainage to prevent furrows and dongas forming that WILL cause damage to the aeroplanes,
- Summer maintenance is key to a good surface in the winter, assisting towards pilot safety, better service to the client and faster fire suppression;
- Safety on runways is critical – prevent animals, pedestrians and vehicles accessing the runways and fill mole holes,
- Spectator value is a huge problem, thus put measures in place to prevent people accessing the runway,
- The remote locations of these runways leads to a serious issue with vandalism and theft,
- All LEFPA Runways are on members properties and are private strips always marked with a letter 'P',
- Runways will be manned during the fire season by qualified bomber loaders and there will also be an airstrip supervisor present.



Aeroplanes are costly to fly and maintain. If the maintenance and upgrade of our runways is not up to scratch the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) will close them. This will force the bombers to operate from a runway which may be further away from the fires they are suppressing thus increasing cost and decreasing fire attack efficiency. LEFPA management, service providers and the pilots kindly request that members with runways comply with this critical task.

## Activities for the Month - March

- Mow airstrips.
- Prepare chemical tracer belts.
- Update road slashing plan.
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Update contact details of all neighbours.
- Train your employees in fire management.
- Check that water points have adequate supplies.
- Finalise a firebreak agreement with your neighbours.
- Draw up an action plan for non-conforming firebreaks.
- Implement an action plan for firebreak preparation.
- Understand the obligations of your insurance warranties.
- Provide / renew the protective clothing for your fire crew members.
- Understand the legal implications concerning your liability.
- Slash burning allowed if weather permits - get a burning permit from LEFPA.



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LOWVELD & ESCARPMENT FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

### Important Note:

- Basic Firefighting Training is available to LEFPA members. Interested parties should contact the LEFPA office.
- FDI weather emails and SMSs are available to LEFPA members, contact Ivina for more information.
- PLAN YOUR TRAINING NEEDS EARLY!
- **SUCCESS** cannot be spelt without **U**. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!