

Woody invasive alien species in Eastern Africa

Assessing and mitigating their impacts on ecosystems and rural livelihoods

What are woody invasive alien plant species?

- Alien Species are species that have been introduced to a region outside their native range
- Invasive alien plant species (IAPS) are those alien plant species that have spread away from their introduction sites and have built up high local densities. Alien plant species are particularly likely to become invasive because in the introduced range they are less regulated by natural enemies than in their native range.
- Woody IAPS are those IAPS that have a woody growth form, i.e. trees and shrubs

Examples:

Prosopis spp.



Lantana camara



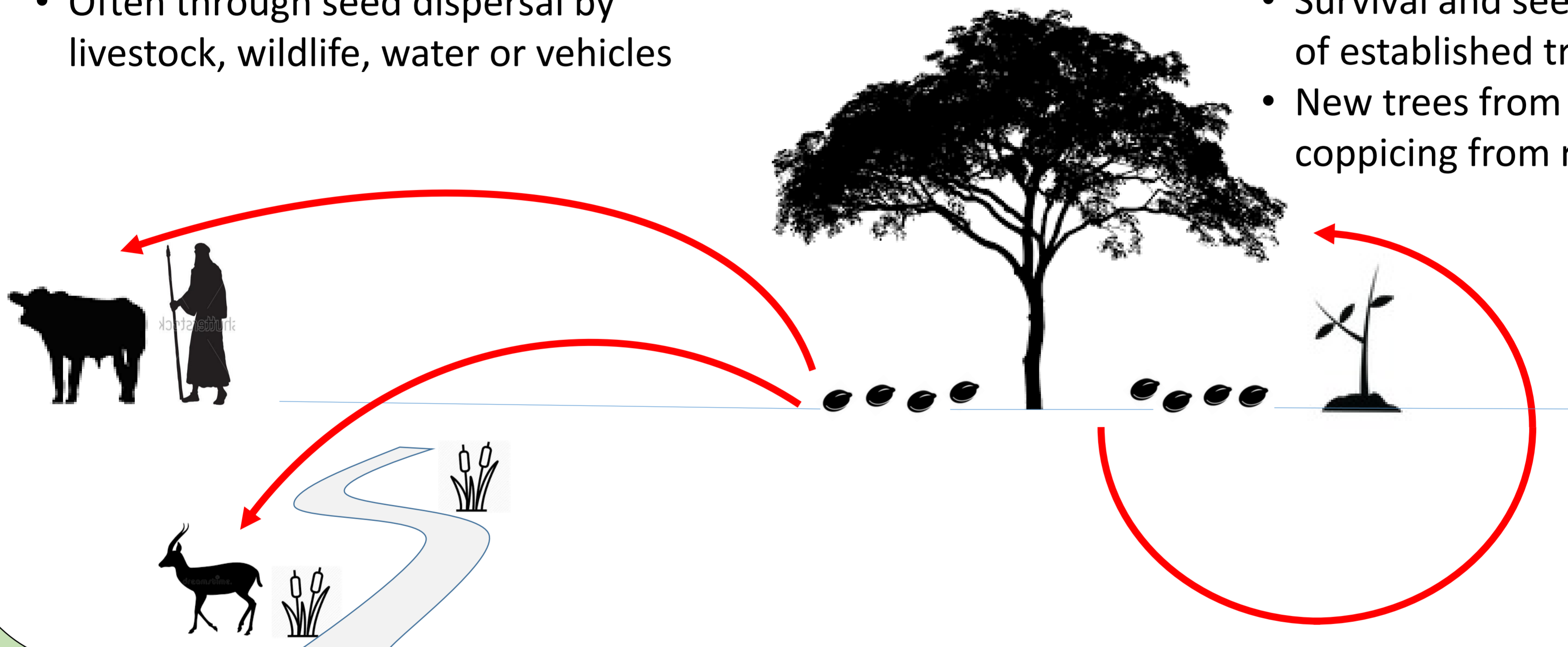
Clidemia hirta



Life cycle and invasion of woody invasive alien plant species

Spread:

- Often through seed dispersal by livestock, wildlife, water or vehicles



Local densities:

- Survival and seed production of established trees
- New trees from seeds or coppicing from rootstocks

Guiding principles of the management of invasive alien plant species:

Prevention:

The goal is to prevent establishment of a woody IAPS in a defined area, e.g. a whole country or a subregion. This approach is generally far more cost-effective and environmentally desirable than measures taken after IAPS establishment in the defined area.

Early detection and rapid response:

If a woody IAPS has established, early detection and rapid response (EDRR) are crucial to prevent its wider establishment. If possible, the preferred response is often to eradicate the organisms as soon as possible. If eradication is not feasible, measures should be taken to stop its further spread into areas not yet invaded.

Control:

When an IAPS has established across a wide range or localised containment is not feasible or resources are not available, long-term control measures should be implemented to reduce its impact on nature's services the rural people rely on (e.g. crops, fodder for livestock, water).

Combine IAPS management with habitat restoration/rehabilitation:

An important aspect of the success of any weed program is follow-up actions that are needed after the initial weed management has occurred. Habitats and ecosystems affected by an IAPS may have to be assisted in recovering, e.g. by restoration (return to semi-natural habitats) or rehabilitation (for crop production or other specific purposes).