



WEEDS CALTROP/CATHEAD

Glossary

Annual

Completing the full cycle of germination to fruiting to a single year, and then dying.

Opportunistically

All year round.

Pinnate

A compound leaf, with leaflets arranged in a similar way to a feather.

For More Information

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Tribulus terrestris

Introduction

Caltrop is widely distributed in many countries, with no obvious country of origin. Forms of it may be native to Western Australia or introduced prior to European settlement.

In Australia, it is a weed of sandy soils, waste places, cultivated crops, overgrazed pastures, stockyards, roadsides, lawns and neglected areas and is troublesome in the pastureland of the wheat belt area.

The plant will poison livestock if ingested and is also suspected to cause dermatitis in stock.

Origin

Unknown.

Status

Declared noxious weed.

Life form

Annual herb.

Description

Leaves: Fern-like; pinnate; spear-shaped; less than 1 cm wide.

Flowers: Yellow; 5 petals; short-lived; 8-15 mm diameter.

Reproduction & Dispersal

By seeds, which can generate

opportunistically. Seeds can survive for many years in the soil.

Growing Habit

Grows flat against the ground. Heavy infestations can produce an abundance of burrs.

Distribution

Scattered populations throughout Western Australian; Kimberley and arid zone.

Growing season

Following rain, late spring - summer.

Flowering Season

January - December.

Fruits

Produces a characteristic woody burr which contains seeds and is highly adapted for dispersal due to rigid sharp spines on burr.

This burr is extremely robust and can be transported by car tires, shoe soles, water, machinery and in the fur of animals.

Effect on

Ecosystem:

Burrs can injure animal's feet. Nuisance around farm buildings, townsites, railway yards and recreation areas due to burrs.

Control

The production of seeds all year round ensures that control of the species is often a prolonged and difficult procedure.

Manual Removal

Small infestations may be removed by hand pulling or cut through the central tap root but care must be taken to avoid burr.

Large infestations are best removed with a combination of mechanical and herbicide control programmes by destroying fruiting plants; repeat until seed reserves exhausted.

Exclude people and close tracks to stop spread.

Chemical Treatment

Glyphosate is effective on seedlings. On bare tracks, diesel can be used to kill plants and penetrate and destroy seeds in surface soil.

Chemical control can be achieved with broad leaf herbicides. Some research is being conducted into biological control agents. Cultural control can be achieved with repeated cultivation every few weeks to deal with fresh germination.

Please see "Herbicides and Pesticides" fact sheet for more information about spraying chemicals.



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