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Agriculture Protection Board
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HOREHOUND



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Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare L.*), a native of Europe and Asia Minor, is a troublesome weed of pastures and waste ground in South Australia and Victoria. In Western Australia it is established mainly in the Ravensthorpe, Gnowangerup and Albany districts, but is potentially dangerous in many other parts of the State. Horehound is a declared plant (noxious weed) in Western Australia.

Horehound is a vigorously growing perennial plant. The weed's bitter taste makes it unpalatable to stock. It is encouraged by grazing as stock selectively graze competing pasture plants. The meat of animals which are forced to eat horehound is tainted by the plant's strong flavour. Horehound will colonise poor and eroded soil and spread to nearby pastures. The seed burrs are a major

(continued overleaf)



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1 Mature plant 2 Detail of stems
3 Wool contamination 4 Rosette

HOREHOUND

(continued)

contaminant of wool. There are also reports of horehound causing stomach impaction in sheep and acting as an alternative host to pest insects.

Description:

Horehound is a bushy, spreading plant growing up to 0.6 m high (1). It has four-sided woody stems and crinkled blue-green leaves (2) covered in long white, woolly hairs. The leaves are arranged in pairs opposite each other on the stems. Small white flowers are borne in dense whorls in the angle between

the stem and the leaf stalks. Flowering occurs from October to March, as long as environmental conditions remain favourable. Spread is primarily by seed. The seeds are contained in a burr with ten hooked spines. The burrs may be carried on wool, clothes, sacks, machinery, vehicles and in chaff and hay (3). Once in the soil they may remain viable for several years. Horehound is claimed to have medicinal properties and is sometimes grown as a herb by people who are unaware of its

weed potential. Some new infestations have certainly originated this way. Prompt action is necessary to control infestations and to prevent the spread of horehound to new areas.

For identification of suspect plants and information on Horehound control, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Telephone Perth (09) 367 0111 or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.