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Agriculture Protection Board
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GORSE



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1. Dense thicket 2. Flowers

(continued overleaf)

GORSE

GORSE (*Ulex europaeus* L.) also known as Furze, is a legume. A native of Europe and North Africa, it is widespread on hill country in Western Europe, New Zealand, Tasmania and Victoria. It was introduced as an ornamental hedge plant into Western Australia but spread to become a weed in south coast districts. It is a declared plant (noxious weed) throughout W.A.

Significance:

Gorse rapidly forms dense, impenetrable thickets which restrict grazing and provide refuge for rabbits. In summer it may be a fire hazard. Stock may injure themselves on the sharp thorns.

Ecology:

Gorse is a perennial plant, reproducing from seed which

germinates in the autumn and spring. It flowers when the bush is about 18 months old, forming large numbers of seed pods. When dry, the seed pods eject the seed a short distance from the parent bush slowly forming dense thickets as the seedlings germinate.

Spread over longer distances is by means of seeds carried internally by stock and on clothes or vehicles or by water.

Heat is necessary to break the dormancy of the seeds. A fire will cause many gorse seedlings to germinate. Removing mature bushes usually stimulates a thick growth of seedlings because the seed is exposed to sunlight. Hard seed may remain viable up to 25 years.

Description:

Gorse is a spiny shrub up to 2.5 m

high spreading in thickets.

The stems are stiff, dark green and leafless. The leaves are reduced to sharp spines 20-30 mm long.

Gorse has numerous yellow pea-type flowers, clustered near the ends of branches. Flowering is mainly from September to January.

The fruit is a dark hairy pod about 10-15 mm long, containing several flattened olive coloured seeds about 3 mm in diameter.

Prompt action is needed to eradicate infestations and to prevent the spread of Gorse to new areas.

For identification of suspected plants, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone Perth (09) 367 0111 or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.