

Agriculture Protection Board
Advisory Leaflet No. 58
April 1980
Agdex No. 647
CP 7257/3/80 — 13½m

CALTROP



1. Mature plant 2. Flower 3. Burr

(continued overleaf)

CALTROP

CALTROP (*Tribulus terrestris* L) is also known as Puncture vine in California. It is a weed native to the tropics which has spread widely into warm temperate regions. Caltrop is a major weed in California and all States of Australia. A native form is found in northern Australia and an introduced form in the agricultural districts. Caltrop is a declared plant (noxious weed) in many areas of Western Australia below the 26° parallel. Caltrop is a weed of disturbed areas including vineyards, waste land and degraded pastures. The spiny burrs cause lameness in farm animals, especially horses. Heavy grazing of Caltrop may cause photosensitization and nitrite poisoning of livestock. The main significance of Caltrop is in townsites, where the burrs injure

the feet of people and domestic animals and puncture tyres.

Description:

Caltrop has prostrate spreading stems covered with silky hairs. Leaves occur in pairs on opposite sides of the stem. Each leaf consists of several pairs of leaflets with a dark green upper surface and pale green lower surface. Small yellow flowers are borne in the leaf axils. The petals fall rapidly and a five segmented burr is formed. Each segment has two pairs of spines and contains 2-3 seeds.

Ecology:

Caltrop seed germinates rapidly after each summer rain. The plant has a woody, rapidly growing tap root which enables it to extract water even during drought. It can flower only three weeks after

germination; ten days later it may produce viable fruits. If conditions remain moist, Caltrop will continue to seed indefinitely.

Caltrop occurs in areas with mean daily summer temperature over about 30° C. It grows on a wide range of soils, but is more common on light textured soils.

Caltrop seeds are well adapted for dispersal. They readily stick to animals, car tyres, shoes or virtually anything with which they come into contact.

For information on Caltrop recognition and control, contact the Agriculture Protection Board (Telephone 09 367 0111) or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture.