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Agriculture Protection Board
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PENNYROYAL



1. Flowering plant 2. Leaves 3. Flowering spike.

(continued overleaf)

PENNYROYAL

PENNYROYAL (*Mentha pulegium L*) is a member of the mint family, which includes Horehound, Deadnettle, Mintweed and Staggerweed.

It was formerly cultivated as a culinary and medicinal herb in Europe and Asia. The pleasant aromatic odour of crushed leaves was also thought to repel fleas. Pennyroyal is a significant weed on summer-moist land of the south coastal plain of Western Australia, where it is a declared plant (noxious weed).

Significance:

Pennyroyal competes with more valuable pasture plants. Pennyroyal consumed by cattle may taint milk and cream and meat with a sweet peppermint-like odour.

Description:

Pennyroyal is an aromatic, spreading herb. The prostrate shoots form roots at stem nodes. The flowering shoots are tough, erect, hairy and up to 0.5 m tall. They form in October from underground rhizomes. Lilac pink flowers are formed in leaf axils from November to March. The square cross-section of the stem is a distinguishing feature of the plant.

The paired leaves which are fleshy, oblong and hairy on both sides, are arranged opposite each other on the stems.

Ecology:

Pennyroyal is a perennial plant, making most of its growth in summer and becoming dormant in

winter. It spreads vegetatively from the rhizomes and by seeds. The seeds require good spring moisture to germinate successfully. They may spread in late cut hay, by machinery, by stock (internally) or as a contaminant in pasture seeds. Plants may also regenerate from root pieces spread by cultivation. It is essential to prevent the further spread of Pennyroyal to other areas of W.A. and to eliminate existing infestations.

For advice on Pennyroyal recognition and control, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone (09) 367 0111 or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.