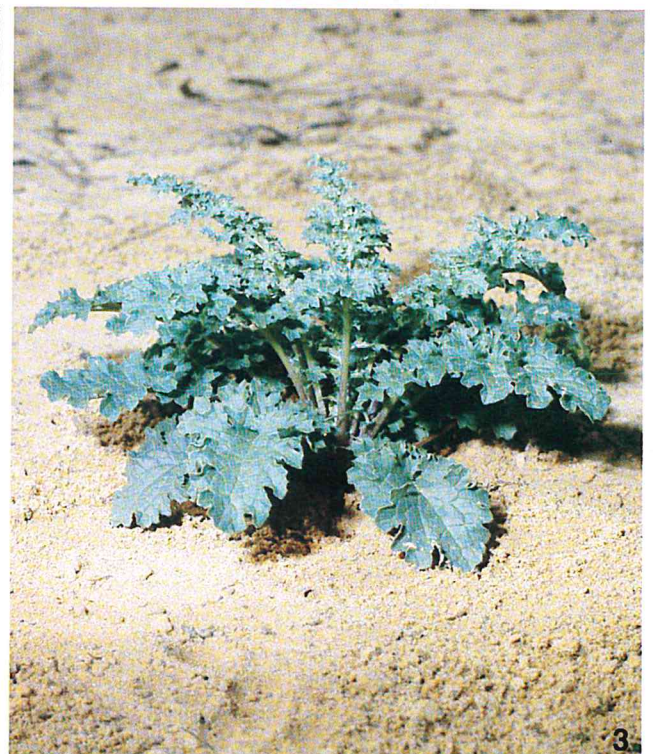


75

Agriculture Protection Board  
Advisory Leaflet No. 75  
June 1982  
Agdex No. 647  
18918/4/82-10M-L/3216

# RAGWORT



1. Flowers 2. Mature Plant 3. Rosette

(continued over)

# RAGWORT

(continued)

**R**AGWORT (*Senecio jacobaea* L.) is a member of the Daisy family (*Compositae*). It originated in Europe. Ragwort is a major pasture weed in New Zealand, Tasmania and the Gippsland district of Victoria. It is a declared plant (noxious weed) in Western Australia. Small outbreaks have been found in south west areas, but all pastures in the high rainfall districts (more than 750mm) are at risk from this weed.

Ragwort competes strongly with more desirable pasture species and can be a very difficult plant to control. Ragwort is poisonous to stock, especially cattle and horses, but animals avoid it unless they are hungry. Cows forced to eat Ragwort produce tainted milk.

#### **Ecology:**

Ragwort is normally a biennial, but cutting or grazing may delay flowering until a later season. In practise, the plant becomes a

perennial when control measures are attempted. Ragwort reproduces from seed, from root fragments and from the crown of the plant, which persists from season to season.

Ragwort flowers from October to March. Each plant produces numerous seeds. Most seeds germinate almost immediately, but some may remain viable in the soil for many years. Seed is carried short distances by wind with the help of a parachute (pappus) of fine hairs. Ragwort seed may be spread long distances by water, stock or machinery and in hay or silage. Root fragments are spread by cultivation and on earth moving machinery.

#### **Description:**

Ragwort is an upright plant 0.6 to 1m tall. Each plant has numerous separate stems; each rigid branched stem is greenish-purple in colour. The leaves are deeply lobed, ragged

in appearance, dark green on top and lighter underneath.

Ragwort flowers are daisy-like, about 1cm across with bright yellow petals.

The seeds are light brown, about 2mm long by 0.5mm in diameter and attached to a pappus of feathery hairs.

Mature plants have a crown just beneath the soil surface, from which numerous fleshy roots are produced. Prompt action is essential to eradicate known infestations and to prevent the spread of the weed 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.*