

Agriculture Protection Board
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CAMELTHORN



1. Mature plant. 2. Seedling. 3. Flower. 4. Seeds.

CAMELTHORN

C^AMELTHORN (*Alhagi pseudalhagi* Fisch.) is a leguminous shrub.

It is a native of southern Russia and northwest India and is a weed of irrigated valleys in southern California and Arizona. Outbreaks have occurred in every mainland state in Australia, one of the largest being in the Eastern Goldfields of WA in the 1960's.

It is a declared plant (noxious weed) throughout Western Australia.

Significance:

Camelthorn is a potentially damaging weed. Cattle may graze the new growth which occurs after summer rain, but the sharp spines discourage sheep grazing at any time. It reduces grazing access to other more useful pasture plants and the spines may injure stock.

Camelthorn is difficult to control because it regenerates easily from roots, so repeated applications of herbicides are required.

Description:

Camelthorn is an erect spiny shrub 0.5 to 1m high. The stems are green and much branched, with numerous spines 2-5mm long. The leaves are blue-green and elongated oval in shape, arranged alternately on the stems. The leaves have a short petiole (leaf stalk); those near the base of the plant grow up to 3cm long but upper leaves are shorter. Camelthorn has inconspicuous purple-brown pea-like flowers arranged in spiny terminal clusters. The fruit is a red-purple pod containing 1-5 kidney shaped seeds with marked constrictions between seeds. A small spine is borne at the end of most pods.

Camelthorn does not normally flower until its second spring.

Camelthorn has an elaborate root system which rapidly develops during the first year, reaching down to 2m and spreading laterally up to 8m.

Ecology:

Camelthorn is a perennial shrub,

spreading mainly by shoots which arise from lateral roots. New plants may arise from root fragments torn off and moved when land is cultivated. Camelthorn is not easily established from seed unless seeds are first scarified, for example by passage through the digestive tract of a grazing animal, to facilitate the uptake of moisture.

Introduction of Camelthorn to Australia appears to have been as a contaminant of lucerne seed.

It is essential to prevent further spread and establishment of Camelthorn in Western Australia.

For further information on Camelthorn 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.