



APB INFONOTE

BLACKBERRY



- 1 Infestation
(Photo: T. Lee)
- 2. Flowers
- 3. Fruit
(Photo: R. Diver)

(continued overleaf)

BLACKBERRY

Blackberry (or Bramble) (*Rubus fruticosus* L. agg.) is a member of the rose family, Rosaceae. It was introduced to Western Australia by early settlers and rapidly established itself in forests, grazing land, waste land and orchards in the high rainfall districts.

Blackberry is mainly confined to the south and west of a line from Bunbury to Albany except for outlying patches in moist valleys. Centres of infestations are frequently found near old timber milling sites where canes for fruit production were established. But now the plant has reached pest proportions and is a declared plant (noxious

weed) in Western Australia.

Ecology

The plant spreads by seeds, which are eaten and excreted unharmed by birds and other animals including man. It also spreads vegetatively from pieces of cane or root moved by cultivation or earth-moving machinery. The canes easily form adventitious roots to establish new plants. Broken pieces of root readily sucker to produce new shoots. Blackberry is a vigorous perennial with dense foliage which shades out pasture plants. It is ignored by most grazing animals and spreads quickly over the paddock. The root system is strong but fairly shallow, spreading

through the soil and forming suckers at intervals.

Blackberries occupy valuable summer moist pasture land. They also provide cover for rabbits and may constitute a fire risk.

Description

Blackberries form a dense thicket of tough flexible canes. Strong hooked thorns 3 to 12 mm long are found on the stems, leaf stalks (petioles) and leaf midribs. The leaves consist of three to five leaflets on a short petiole. Each leaf is dark green on the upper surface and pale green underneath. Leaf edges are finely serrated. Flowers are pinkish-white with five petals and

numerous yellow stamens. Flowering takes place from December to March. The fruit is formed in loose bunches near the ends of the fruiting canes. Each fruit consists of a cluster of globular berries surrounding a pithy core. The fruit are initially green; they turn red, and then black as they ripen. Concerted action is necessary to control blackberry infestations and prevent their spread to new areas.

For information on blackberry control contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Telephone Perth (09) 368 3333 or any district officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.