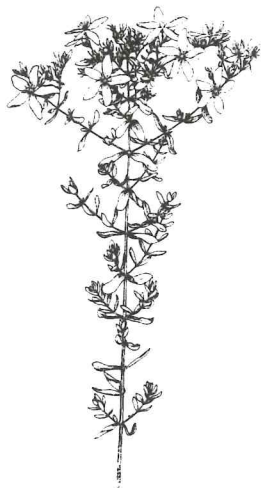


ST JOHN'S WORT CONTROL



St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) originated in Eurasia but has since spread to nearly every continent. It is a major pasture weed in New South Wales and Victoria. Small outbreaks have been found in the higher rainfall areas of south-western Western Australia, mainly around old timber mills.

St John's Wort can form dense stands which completely dominate pastures, especially if they are overgrazed. It is a poisonous plant which causes photo-sensitisation in white-faced stock and may attack the nervous system causing general debility and eventual death.

It is a perennial plant reproducing from seeds and underground stems (rhizomes). These grow slowly through the soil, gradually spreading the plant. Rhizomes may also grow into new plants when moved by cultivation or earth moving machinery.

Seeds are frequently spread in hay or chaff and may remain dormant in the soil for up to six years. They may germinate in either autumn or spring; flowering is delayed until the second year.

In winter St John's Wort is a low-growing plant with spindly stems and a mass of leaves. In spring it forms woody stems up to one metre high. These are shiny and cylindrical with a pair of ridges stretching up opposite sides.

It has long narrow leaves which are translucent, due to oil glands, when held up to the light.

In summer St John's Wort produces numerous bright yellow flowers, in clusters near the top of the stems. The flowers are bright yellow and large, up to 25 mm across, each containing five petals.

In all cases St John's Wort will require treatment for a number of years until the dormant seeds and rhizomes in the soil are exhausted.

Control

Cultivation and grubbing

Grubbing and cultivation are ineffective as a control measures because St John's Wort can regenerate from rhizomes. The weed cannot survive in densely shaded areas therefore tree cropping and establishment of improved pastures have proved successful.

Chemical control

2,4-D amine
(500 g/litre)

KNAPSACK: 6 ml per litre water
BOOMSPRAY OR HANDLANCE: 6 litres per hectare

Chemical control is best carried out in spring, but may be continued until the flowering stage. Reseed larger infestations with improved pasture to reduce resurgence the following year

2,4-D ester
(800 g/litre)

KNAPSACK: 4 ml per litre
BOOMSPRAY OR HANDLANCE: 4 litres per hectare.

Use where spray drift is unlikely to be a problem

Glyphosate (420g/litre)

KNAPSACK: 10 ml/litre of water in a knapsack sprayer.

Use near trees. This chemical is non-selective but will only kill plants whose foliage is sprayed.

Diuron (500 g/litre)

KNAPSACK: 50 ml per litre

This is suitable for small infestations only and is not recommended for broadacre control. Do not use near desirable plants.

Further Information

For advice in drawing up a St John's Wort control program for your property contact your nearest Agriculture Protection Board district officer.