Horehound

Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) is an invasive, perennial weed that was first introduced to Australia as a medicinal herb. It invades rural properties, with large mature plants producing in excess of 20,000 seeds.

What does it look like?

Horehound stems are square and covered with white, cottony hairs.

It has velvety, near circular green-grey leaves in opposite pairs. They are deeply veined and wrinkled with toothed edges and are covered with hairs, especially on the lower leaf surface.

Small white flowers are produced during summer and autumn in dense whorls in the leaf axils along the upper part of the shoot.

Each burr produces up to 4 seeds per burr. Each burr is about 1-2mm long.

Where is it found?

Horehound has spread to its limits in SA, being widespread in all settled and pastoral areas with at least 200mm annual rainfall.

In the Northern and Yorke region, horehound has a scattered distribution and is locally abundant. It has the potential to spread much more widely across the region where alkaline or neutral soils are present.

Horehound seed is dispersed by animals, stock or car tyres. The dry, hooked fruit or burrs attach readily to wood, fur and clothing.

Water can disperse the seeds, which may also be carried in mud on vehicles. Horses are also

known to pass seeds in viable condition after ingestion.

Mature plants can produce in excess of 20,000 seeds per year and seeds can survive in the soil for 7-10 years.

What is its impact?

Horehound tolerates drought and poor soils and spreads when palatable species have been overgrazed or drought affected.

Horehound invades disturbed ground such as roadsides, grazing land and waste ground.

Horehound is not very palatable to stock and the plants flavour taints meat if grazed.

The burrs contaminate wool, reducing the value of fleece.

What can you do?

Preventing the spread of horehound is the best control measure. Be aware of the risks of purchasing stock, fodder and machinery from contaminated areas. Clean shoes, equipment, machinery and vehicles before returning to the region from infested areas.

Small infestations can be controlled by grubbing plants or spot-spraying. Bag and dispose of seeds on site responsibly.

A combination of control methods in conjunction with good pasture management and revegetation can be applied to dense infestations for best long-term control. Don't allow horehound to flower and set seed before treatment. Aim to maintain or reduce horehound densities to manageable levels.

Control options include cultivation, grazing and chemical control. For advice on chemical control techniques contact the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board. Please refer to the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* for advice on chemical control. You can find it on PIRSA's website at: www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity

Biological control is present in the Northern and Yorke region and helps to limit the spread and density of horehound infestations, though it is not effective as a standalone method. Plume moth larvae are small green caterpillars that severely damage the plant's growing tips as they feed. This weakens the plant and reduces the number of flowers and seeds produced.

What are your responsibilities?

Horehound is a declared plant under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. Landholders must control the plant on their property. Sale or movement of plants or goods containing plants or plant parts is prohibited within the state.

More information

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