

PATERSON'S CURSE

Echium plantagineum



Tamar Region Natural



Resource Management Strategy

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?

Family: Boraginaceae

Growth Habit: Paterson's Curse starts off as a large, flat rosette of slightly hairy leaves with well marked veins. Flowering stems can grow to be 600-900mm tall. These uncoil with new flowers at the tip and developing seeds protected by bristly husks further down the stem.

Type of plant: Herbaceous annual or short lived perennial.

Flowers: Deep blue to purple, 20-30mm long with five petals fused into a trumpet shape.

Fruit/Seed: Crinkled brown or grey seeds in groups of four around the stem protected by stiffly bristled husks. Seed may remain dormant in the soil for up to six years but most will germinate within two years.

Dispersal: Roughened seed coats allow seed to adhere to wool, fur and clothing. Viable seed is passed by animals that have been feeding on the weed. Seed can be carried by water runoff. An important means of dispersal is contaminated hay and feed grain.

Distribution: Paterson's Curse occurs in all agricultural areas of Tasmania in small scattered infestations. Commonly it is found around old home sites, poultry sheds and on road sides. New infestations in pasture have been linked to the feeding out of contaminated feed grain.

Status: Paterson's Curse is a declared weed in Tasmania largely due to actual and potential impacts on agricultural productivity. As such, importation, sale and distribution of this plant is prohibited. The legal responsibilities of landholders and other stakeholders for this declared weed is specified in statutory weed management plans available from the DPIW.

Weed Impact:

- *Once established Paterson's Curse can strongly compete with pasture species reducing grazing productivity and increasing control costs causing more frequent pasture renovation;*
- *Paterson's Curse contains an accumulative poison which may cause chronic liver damage to stock although they will usually avoid it if there is other green feed available;*
- *Can cause severe hay fever in some people.*

Although Paterson's Curse has the potential to be a damaging weed, if outbreaks are spotted early, control and eradication can be achieved by using an integrated approach.

CONTROL OF PATERSON'S CURSE IS ESSENTIAL



Control

Mechanical Control:

Hand hoeing, pulling and cutting are methods suitable for isolated plants provided the growing point and the top 20mm to 40mm of the tap root are removed otherwise regrowth may occur. Flowering plants should be burned or otherwise destroyed because seed may continue to mature on a plant even after it is cut, pulled or hoed.

Cultivation:

Paterson's Curse can effectively be controlled in arable areas by cultivation especially if followed by cropping with either root or cereal crops or establishment of a vigorous smothering pasture.

Chemical Control:

Paterson's Curse seeds normally germinate in autumn after sufficient rainfall and are best controlled at this early seedling stage. The herbicides can be either applied by backpack, handgun and boom spray units depending on the size of the infestation. The use of METSULPHURON METHYL (Brushoff™ or Brushkiller™) is recommended for use on Paterson's Curse in non crop and pasture situations due to its low toxicity and nil withholding period. This product does not have a withholding period for stock and is unscheduled under the Poisons Act. This product will affect clovers and newly sown pastures. As with all herbicide use, please adhere strictly to the label – it is there to protect the user, the environment and enables the product to be used effectively.

Herbicide Control:

Herbicide rates (METSULPHURON METHYL) for use on Paterson's Curse in Tasmania as per label for all situations:

- **Boom** 15 grams per Hectare plus wetting agent;
- **Handgun** 5 grams per 100 litres plus wetting agent;
- **Backpack** 0.5 grams per 10 litres plus wetting agent.

(Herbicide advice and general advice on control is provided by: FERAL MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS PTY LTD – Jamie Cooper on 0419 355 916)

Remember:

To control any infestation of weeds you must ensure that flowering plants are controlled early and are unable to seed and you must follow up to protect your previous efforts.



'BEE' Careful



Some herbicides are toxic to bees.

As a general rule avoid applying herbicides when and where bees are foraging.

ALWAYS READ THE LABEL.

If you see any Paterson's Curse please provide information to:

Tamar NRM

Tel: 03 6323-3310 or

email: tamarnrm@launceston.tas.gov.au



For further information on Paterson's Curse, go to DPIW (www.dpiw.tas.gov.au)
or Tamar Valley Weeds Strategy (www.weeds.asn.au)