

BLUE HELIOTROPE



Blue heliotrope (*Heliotropium amplexicaule*) is a drought tolerant and poisonous weed which is spreading throughout Central West NSW. Once it takes over, it is difficult to control in bushland, pasture and cropping situations. Early identification and control is critical.

It is unpalatable to stock, but when it is eaten, it can cause liver damage, photosensitisation or sudden death in pigs, horses, cattle, sheep and goats. Blue heliotrope is drought tolerant due to its long taproot and complex system of lateral roots that occur throughout the soil profile. It is able to store energy in its roots and is often the first plant to respond after opening summer rain. Heliotrope robs moisture from desirable annual and perennial pasture plants.

Blue heliotrope is a summer growing, prostrate perennial which can be 15 to 30cm high and 30 to 200cm in diameter. The leaves are spear shaped and a dull green. The stem, like the leaves are hairy. The flower is possibly the most distinguishing feature, being bluish-

purple with yellow centres. Flowers are in dense clusters along one side of a coiled stalk, often referred to as a fiddle neck. The plant emits a strong, distinctive smell.

Blue heliotrope is difficult to control, so limiting its spread is very important. It can spread by seed or by root fragments. Seed can stick to clothing or animals and can be found in fodder or on machinery. Some seed can be viable after traveling through animal's digestive systems. Root fragments can be spread by machinery, particularly cultivation machinery or graders, as well as washed down stream and spread via waterways.

For more information please contact

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Local Land
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