

# Blue Heliotrope

Blue Heliotrope is an extremely drought hardy weed with the ability to persist and spread easily in drought conditions. This major agricultural nuisance occupies over 110,000 hectares in New South Wales.

## WHAT IS BLUE HELIOTROPE?

Blue Heliotrope (*heliotropium amplexicaule*) is a summer growing perennial plant, growing 15-30cm in height and 30-200cm in width. Due to its ability to withstand severe drought conditions, Blue Heliotrope is a major issue within the Mid-Western Regional area. Blue Heliotrope spreads easily as it produces sticky seeds which attach to animals, machinery, humans and can also be moved by water.

## MAJOR IMPACTS TO YOU

Blue Heliotrope competes with desirable pastures and causes toxicity to stock due to it containing pyrrolizidine alkaloids (organic compounds to have physiological impacts when consumed).

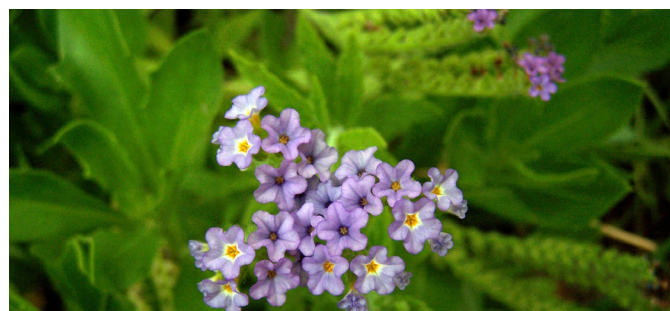
This makes it undesirable for stock to consume, however it can be eaten if no other feed is available. Should copious amounts be ingested, damage can be caused to the liver. Horses, pigs, cattle, sheep and goats can all be affected by the weed.

## IDENTIFYING BLUE HELIOTROPE

Blue Heliotrope has branched stems protruding from the woody rootstock and is aromatic – often smelling like passionfruit. The leaves are a dull green and soft in texture. At the top of the plant is a purple/blue flower with a yellow centre.



BLUE HELIOTROPE THRIVES IN EXTREMELY DRY CONDITIONS



FLOWERS ARE BLUE/PURPLE IN COLOUR WITH A YELLOW CENTRE



A Paddock TAKEN OVER BY BLUE HELIOTROPE



BLUE HELIOTROPE'S PRICKLY, WOODY STEM SMELLS OF PASSIONFRUIT

Images: NSW DPI

## CONTROLLING THE SPREAD OF BLUE HELIOTROPE

Control of Blue Heliotrope can be difficult, but it can be managed with a combination of methods:

- **Pasture management** – Having an active summer growing pasture which can out-compete Blue Heliotrope will provide long term control.
- **Grazing management** – Sheep can be grazed on paddocks infested with Blue Heliotrope, however not for extended periods of time. They should also be held in a quarantine paddock when rotated, due to seeds remaining unharmed when passed through animals. Merinos have the greatest tolerance to Blue Heliotrope, with adult wethers recommended for use. Horses, pigs and cattle should never be used in a grazing management plan for Blue Heliotrope.
- **Chemical control** – Herbicides play an important role in controlling Blue Heliotrope as they aid the destruction of the root system which generally extends over 1 metre. Chemical treatments are most effective when the plant is actively growing and has commenced flowering (late February–March).



### YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Land owners under the Biosecurity Act 2015 have a General Biosecurity Duty (GBD) where they are expected to, within reason know about any weeds which may impact their land. Owners should have a plan of management in place to reduce, minimise or eliminate the risk posed by weeds on their property.

When reporting Blue Heliotrope the infected area will be inspected by Council along with a management plan strategy. A follow-up inspection will then be arranged. Council is responsible for enforcing the Biosecurity Act 2015 and its regulations. This includes fines for failure to comply with GBD.



### COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY

When you report Blue Heliotrope, the infected area will be inspected, along with a management strategy plan. A repeat inspection will then be arranged. To inspect properties for weeds and provide technical advice on how to manage infestations, Council is responsible for enforcing the Biosecurity Act 2015 and its regulations. This includes fines for failure to comply with GBD.

## GET THE FREE WEEDS APP

NSW Department of Primary Industries has developed an app that provides key information to help users reduce the impact of over 300 weeds in NSW, called NSW WeedWise.

Users can search or browse weed names (common or scientific), recognise a weed by its physical description and image gallery, and find out about its impacts, where it occurs, how it spreads and its preferred habitat.

Control options are described for each weed and the herbicides registered for control by the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority are listed,

including application rates and techniques, and any minor-use permits that must be complied with.

General, State or Regional biosecurity duties under the Biosecurity Act 2015 are displayed for each weed.

NSW WeedWise is provided as a free smartphone app through the app stores.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit Council's website [www.midwestern.nsw.gov.au](http://www.midwestern.nsw.gov.au), or the Department of Primary Industries website [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au) and search 'weeds'. Council's Weeds Team are available to assist on 6378 2939 or at [weeds.admin@midwestern.nsw.gov.au](mailto:weeds.admin@midwestern.nsw.gov.au).

**DISCLAIMER** | The information contained in this fact sheet is general in nature and should not be relied upon as the complete source of information to be considered. This document is not intended as a substitute for consulting relevant legislation or for obtaining appropriate professional advice relevant to your particular circumstances.