

St John's Wort

What is it?

Introduced in 1875 as a garden plant and for medicinal purposes, it has adapted to Australian conditions and is now a major weed. It infests pastures, water catchment reserves, National Parks and roadsides. It causes photosensitization in cattle, horses and goats, resulting in loss of condition, low productivity and sometimes death.

What does it look like?

There are two main strains of St Johns Wort in NSW, the most common being the narrow, two leaved strain. It has leaves 7-9 mm wide, while the broad leaf strain has leaves 10 – 12 mm wide.

Flowers are a bright yellow colour, in a forked leafy panicle. They are 15-30mm in diameter and have five petals, five sepals many stamens and a three-cell ovary. The petals, sepals, leaves, and stems all have black oil glands which, when crushed, produce the red hypericine known as St Johns Blood.

Seeds are small (estimated 7 million per kilogram), they need mild temperatures, light and rainfall before they will germinate. They can remain viable up to 12 years.

Control Measures

Physical control:
Isolated single stalk annual plants can be removed by pulling or chipping, all roots must be removed or the plant will regenerate: Mature seed heads should be physically removed and burnt

St John's Wort

(*Hypericum perforatum*)

A category W2 Noxious weed. Under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993, infestations must be continually suppressed and destroyed.



Herbicide Control:

Several herbicides are registered for control they include *Triclopyr+ Picloram*, *Glyphosate*, *2.4.D ester*.

Herbicides can be used at anytime of the year when active growth occurs.

Biological control:

A mite (*Aculus hyperici*) has been released at many locations since 1991, but has rarely established, most likely due to poor seasonal conditions. Biological control will not eradicate St John's Wort but it may bring heavily infested areas under control.

An integrated approach to St John's Wort control is recommended. Other important aspects of this approach include pasture establishment and management, and grazing strategy. Suitable and competitive pasture species need to be established for your particular area.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (January 2004). Users are reminded of the need to ensure that any product purchased for the control of St John's Wort is registered for that purpose. The author cannot take responsibility for any changes, or modifications, that are made to product registration or requirements that may occur after January 2004.

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Design by Carlena Payne (carlenadesigns@hotmail.com).