

Spot treatment of blue heliotrope with Graslan®

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Farmers and Graziers on sandy loam soils in the Coonabarabran shire and other areas of NSW and Qld are faced with the ever increasing problem of Blue heliotrope (*Heliotropium amplexicaule*). It aggressively invades fallows and pastures almost to the exclusion of all other feed in summer. The plant is also a problem on roadways and waterways.

Blue heliotrope is a summer growing, semi prostrate, hairy perennial growing up to 20 cm high and to 200 cm in diameter. The plant grows quickly and can cover large areas, particularly if small infestations are cultivated as the seed and root segments can produce new plants. A similar problem occurs when a grader is used on roadside infestations.

The plant also contains toxic alkaloids that are known to poison stock by damaging the liver. Sheep, horses and cattle are affected.

Method

@BODY TEXT SM = A preliminary investigation to test the herbicide Graslan® (200g/kg Tebuthiuron) began in August 1992 after noticing that blue heliotrope growing under African Boxthorn (that had been treated with Graslan® in winter 1990) had died and had not regerminated.

The original trial (August 1992) using 2 g and 4 g/m² of Graslan® is still showing total control of blue heliotrope (March 1997). A second trial was commenced in December 1993. Treatments consisted of 0, 0.5, 1 and 2 g/m².

In 1995 Consol lovegrass and Premier digit grass were introduced into the 1992 trial and are now doing well. A large amount of the original germination was pulled out by grazing cattle before the trial was fenced (1996).

A further trial was commenced in June 1996 us-

ing 0.5g/m² of Graslan®, spread by a Solo Mister/Duster. This machine is capable of low application rates and larger areas can be treated with a more even spread of chemical.

Premier digit grass was surface sown over the trial during good rains in January 1997. A good germination had occurred by February 1997.

Results and Discussion

Within 18 months of the original trial (1992) grasses and clovers had returned to the treated areas of their own accord and none of the trial plots have shown any heliotrope regrowth from old rootstock or germination from seed as at March 1997.

The soil on the trial site is sandy loam and the average density of blue heliotrope was 14 mature plants/m². At this density very little summer feed is available even though a topdressing program has been carried out for some time. Lime was also applied to this country. Winter pasture consists of grasses and clovers.

Trees and shrubs within 20 m of the plots have not shown any adverse effect. The rate of Graslan® being used per sq/m² is lower than those of registered rates for several woody weeds/trees.

Graslan® is easy to use on isolated plants and the ability to treat outbreaks at any time of the year makes this finding of enormous benefit in combating blue heliotrope.

There is a valid place for Graslan® in the treatment of blue heliotrope provided that it is used with common sense and according to label and permit restraints.

A permit has been obtained to use Graslan® at 0.5 g/m² for blue heliotrope control.