

WEEDS IN NON-CROP SITUATIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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SIGNIFICANCE OF WEEDS IN PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Although a considerable amount of spraying is undertaken for the control of weeds in non-crop situations, most of this is related to industrial areas where valuable property is being protected from fire. Railway lines and yards as well as grain storage sites have some relationship to agriculture. The use of chemicals to create firebreaks is a growing practice on farms, particularly in situations where cultivation is impossible or where the threat of erosion makes the extra cost involved worthwhile.

Treatments used for the control of noxious weeds on roadsides and in railway areas would be covered in this category as the herbicides used are not selective. The importance of this type of weed control is related to restricting the spread of weeds along railways and roadsides and then on to farming land.

PRESENT PRACTICES OF WEED CONTROL

Because of the low summer rainfall in most areas of the State, the main weeds in non-crop situations are annuals. The most commonly used herbicide is a mixture of amitrole (40%) and atrazine (40%). This is used extensively for weed control on railways, footpaths in country towns, and other similar areas. This mixture is added to 2,4-D sodium salt for controlling noxious weeds in non-crop situations.

Other herbicides used would include diuron as well as mixtures of a range of chemicals.

One of the results of these practices has been an increase in perennial grasses, and couch grass particularly, is spreading into drier parts of the State. Although 2,2-DPA amitrole and bromacil are usually effective in controlling perennial grasses, when growing on railway ballast greater difficulty is experienced.

In irrigation channels high rates of application of long lasting herbicides such as atrazine, simazine, diuron and chemicals with a short residual life.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RESEARCH, EXTENSION AND LEGISLATION IN CONTROLLING WEEDS

In non-crop situations research has tended to relate mainly to

the effectiveness of herbicides in controlling weeds. Usually the adoption of a treatment for widespread use in agriculture is dependent on the cost. For industrial weed control, cost is less important, but a long lasting treatment is usually preferred.

In recent years more interest is being shown in the residual effect of herbicides, particularly where it is possible for them to move into crop situations.

There is little doubt that great savings could be made by investigation and the formulation of recommendations for particular problems. Current treatments are designed to cover a wide range of weeds in many different situations. The need for extension in this field is apparent in Western Australia.

There is no specific legislation for non-crop situations apart from that designed for the control of 2,4-D used in agriculture. The time may come when some form of control is desirable because of the problem of residues.