

THE DISTRIBUTION OF FIELD DODDER, *CUSCUTA* SPP.

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Abstract. During the last four years there has been an increasing awareness of field dodder, *Cuscuta campestris*, a yellow twining plant that parasitises lucerne and other broad-leaved plants. It occurs throughout N.S.W., S.A. and Victoria where it is most important in lucerne growing areas causing some paddocks to be returned to grass pastures.

The distribution of field dodder in south-eastern Australia is not restricted to any particular climatic zone, and it is capable of growth from the highland region of the upper Murray River to its lower flood plain, and to the coastal areas in northern N.S.W.

In N.S.W., field dodder has been recorded in ten geographic regions: North Coast, Central Coast, Northern Tablelands, North West Slopes, Central West Slopes, South-West Slopes, North-West Plains, South-West Plains, Far-South-West Plains and Far-North-West Plains.

There are 55 specimens held in the National Herbarium in Sydney, originating from the ten regions. These were collected between 1913 and 1985.

Most of the specimens collected prior to May 1977 were identified as *Cuscuta australis* but a review of these specimens by the Herbarium in 1977 has led to them being reclassified as *C. campestris*.

Field dodder has been recorded on a wide range of species belonging to the genera *Bidens*, *Xanthium*, *Chenopodium*, *Verbena*, *Solanum*, *Polygonum*, *Rumex*, *Tribulus*, *Trifolium* and *Medicago*.

In 1986, new infestations were recorded at Yanco, Wellington, Biggara, Delungra, and Menindee. At these locations field dodder parasitised species belonging to *Xanthium* and *Polygonum*.

A survey of N.S.W. shires between 1983 and 1986 identified four major infestations: on the flood plain of the Namoi River near Manilla (600 ha); near Forbes (200 ha); in the bed of Lake Brewster, an irrigation storage area on the Lachlan River (600 ha); and in the Lake Victoria/Rufus River area (800 ha) (Milvain and Smith, unpublished data). Other areas ranging in size from a few square metres up to 10 ha, are scattered throughout the state.