



Government  
of South Australia

# WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

## DODDER



*Threads of golden dodder on a host plant*



*Close-up of golden dodder*



*Red dodder in flower*



*Flowers of golden dodder*

# DODDER



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Dodder, *Cuscuta* species, are parasitic weeds of broadleaf plants. Three introduced *Cuscuta* species are recognised as serious weeds in South Australia: *C. campestris* (golden dodder) introduced from the USA, *C. suaveolens* (Chilean dodder) introduced from South America and *C. planiflora* (red dodder) introduced from the Mediterranean. Because Australia currently has a dodder-free status in the world seed export market, it is important to keep dodder off clean properties or to recognise and destroy new infestations before they become established.

## Distribution

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Eyre Peninsula                          | - not present   |
| Northern pastoral                       | - not present   |
| Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula | - not present   |
| Murray Mallee                           | - common on Murray River flood plain between the border and Overland corner, isolated outbreaks below Overland corner |
| South East                              | - one infestation of golden dodder, large infestations of red and Chilean dodder that are confined to swamps          |
| Central region                          | - not present   |

## Impacts

Dodders parasitise only broadleaf plants including lucerne, vegetables and weeds like Bathurst burr and wireweed. The dodder absorbs all its nutrients and water from the host plant and also shades the crop with its dense mass of stems. This reduces crop yields significantly. Infested areas may be quarantined, causing significant financial loss and inconvenience.

## Recognition

Dodder is an annual parasitic weed which produces fine twining stems without leaves. Golden dodder has yellow stems, red dodder has red-pink stems and Chilean dodder has cream stems. Stems attach to host plants with small suckers which penetrate the leaves and stems of the host plant. Flowers are white, cream or pink, bell shaped and 3-4mm in diameter. The fruits are the same size as the flowers, minus the petals and contain up to 4 seeds. Seeds are enclosed in round capsules, are brown, yellow or grey, 1-2mm in diameter and have a hard, rough seed coat. The seeds can remain viable for up to 60 years in good conditions. Dodder has no root system as it obtains all nutrients by attaching to a host plant.

Do not confuse with native dodder laurel, which is common throughout the state but only parasitises native shrubs.

## Ecology/Biology

Dodder reproduces from seed only which germinate in spring, summer and autumn but mostly during summer. Seedlings have no roots and live only for a few days unless the shoot comes in contact and attaches to a host plant. The seedling then dies below the point of attachment and has no further contact with the soil. It is entirely dependent on the host plant for nutrients and moisture. Twining stems grow rapidly over the host plant, flowering and seed set can begin in a matter of weeks and continue for months.

Dispersal of dodder is mostly by seed which can contaminate harvested seed and then be sown elsewhere. Dodder seed can also be transported by animals and deposited in their droppings.

Further Information :

Parsons, W.T., Cuthbertson, E.G. (1992). *Noxious Weeds of Australia* . Inkata Press.

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**For more advice on recognising and controlling dodder, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board :**