



Government
of South Australia

WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

NOOGOORA BURR



Dense infestation of Noogoora burr on the Murray



Fruits (burs) of Noogoora burr



Comparison of Californian burr (left) and Noogoora burr (right)

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Noogoora burr, *Xanthium strumarium* is a group of species including *X. occidentale* (Noogoora burr) and *X. californicum* (Californian burr). Both weeds are annual plants that have been introduced from North America. They are very similar in appearance and ecology and can be described together.

Distribution

Eyre Peninsula	- isolated plants
Northern pastoral	- common in eastern districts, isolated patches in northern pastoral areas
Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula	- small isolated infestations with a strong association with watercourses near the NSW border
Murray Mallee	- scattered along the Murray River
South East	- isolated plants
Central region	- isolated outbreaks along watercourses

Occasional plants are found in saleyards across the state.

Impacts

Burrs of noogoora burr contaminate wool, adding to the cost of handling and processing the wool as well as the final cost of the woollen product. Spines of this plant also cause physical damage to stock, people and shearing machinery. Wool processors generally reject infested wool.

Noogoora burr competes strongly with summer crops and pastures due to its extensive root system and rapid growth. These plants may also carry diseases of crops and vegetables.

Seedlings are poisonous to stock, particularly cattle and pigs, the toxin being carboxyatractyloside. Symptoms include muscular spasms, vomiting, salivation and scouring. Death may occur within hours or days depending on the amount eaten. Noogoora burr complex also causes dermatitis and hayfever in humans and animals.

Recognition

Noogoora burrs are erect annual herbs to 2.5m tall with two growth forms ; either erect single stemmed plants or many branched spreading plants. Leaves are dark green and similar in shape to grape vine leaves approximately 15cm in diameter. Stems are blotched or streaked with purple. Flowers are green and in inconspicuous clusters around leaf axils.

The fruit is a hard woody burr with many hooked spines around body and two terminal beaks. The terminal beaks of Noogoora burr are up to 2mm long and straight while the terminal beaks of Californian burr are slightly longer and curved. Each burr contains two seeds which are 6-10mm long.

Ecology/Biology

Both burrs prefer moist situations such as edges of waterways and damp depressions, but not permanently waterlogged soil.

Seeds of both species germinate with increasing temperatures towards the end of spring after rain or irrigation. Late germinating plants can produce burrs at a very early age. Californian burr germinates and matures about a month earlier than Noogoora burr. Burrs form from February to May, after flowering is triggered by shorter days. Plants die in late autumn but remain standing carrying mature burrs for many months.

The hooked spines on the burrs are well adapted for dispersal on animals by clinging to wool and fur. The burrs are easily carried on clothing, packaging and water. Burrs also contaminate summer crops.

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 noogoora burr, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board :