Weed Sheet

Declared weed sheet : Innocent weed

Government of South Australia
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin
Natural Resources Management Board

Innocent weed

(Cenchrus longispinus & Cenchrus incertus)

Innocent weed is a summer growing annual grass that produces small barbed burrs which are easily dispersed by attaching to machinery, clothing, wool and fur. It can severely reduce the value of wool, hides and crops through contamination and readily establishes in low fertility dry sandy soils and other disturbed areas.

Innocent weed

Image: A Harvey

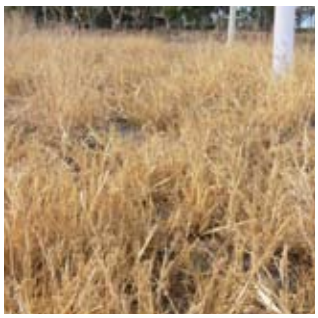


Image: A Harvey

Image: AMLR NRMB

Image: A Harvey

Image: T Bowman

Image: AMLR NRMB

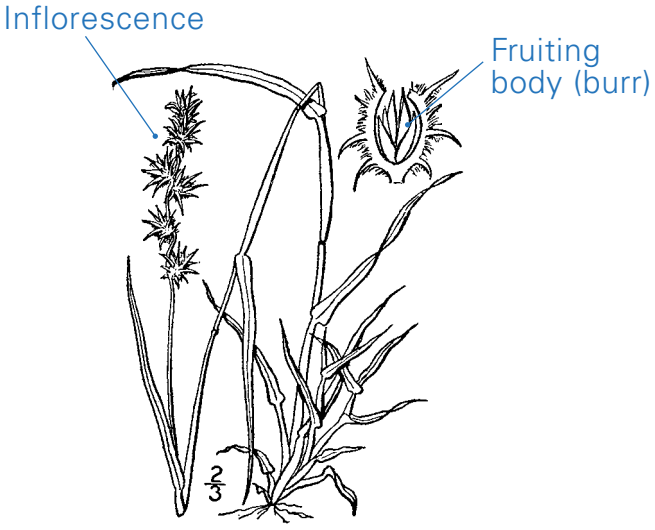


Image: USDA

Cover images (clockwise from top left): A Harvey; AMLR NRMB; Z Main; A Harvey

What is it?

Innocent weed is a summer growing annual grass that produces small barbed burrs. These are easily dispersed by attaching to machinery, clothing, wool and fur. Innocent weed has the potential to severely reduce the value of wool, hides and crops through contamination. It readily establishes in low fertility dry sandy soils and other disturbed areas.

What does it look like?

Growth: Innocent weed is a spring to summer growing erect or prostrate annual grass that reproduces by seed and grows to 60cm high. It has several stems branching from the base of the plant containing nodes from which roots can form if touching the ground.

Leaves: Innocent weed has leaves approximately 20cm long and 5-8mm wide, serrated and smooth often with a slight twist.

Inflorescence: Inflorescence occurs in cylindrical clusters of between 8-40 spiny burrs each containing up to 70 spines.

Fruiting body: Fruiting bodies occur in clusters of straw coloured burrs (when mature) with each between 5-8mm long and 3-7mm in diameter (not including spines) containing barbed spines no greater than 7mm long with a slight purple tinge.

Seed: Each plant contains up to 1000 egg shaped seeds (1-3 seeds per burr) flattened on one side, 2-4mm long and 2-3mm wide. The second and third seeds to be produced are often dormant and can remain viable for up to three years with the first to form being the largest and capable of germination within a few months.

Seed is known to germinate from a depth of 25cm beneath the soil surface.

Roots: Innocent weed has a fibrous root system that is generally shallow although can be over 30cm deep in some soil types.

Why is it a problem?

Innocent weed has the potential to be a major problem due to the burrs ability to severely reduce the value of fleece and hides, increase the cost of shearing and slaughter and contaminate seed crops, dried fruit and a range of other agricultural produce.

In heavily infested areas, the presence of Innocent weed can prevent the use of working dogs and even at very low densities the burrs can become stuck in the mouths of grazing stock and cause problematic ulcers.

Due to the effective dispersal mechanism of Innocent weed it has the potential to be spread over large distances.

Affected land uses: Land uses affected include Crop/pasture systems, grazing land, irrigated crops, horticulture, recreational and amenity areas, roadsides and cultivated land.

Where is it found?

Innocent weed is widespread throughout the Murray Mallee and irrigated areas along the Murray River of both Victoria and South Australia. In South Australia, it has also been found on the Eyre Peninsula, northern pastoral and agricultural districts, and in isolated patches of the South East. It is common in coastal Queensland and is found in small isolated areas of the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

How is it spread?

Due to its numerous barbed spines Innocent weed is dispersed by attaching itself to wool, fur, clothing and other fibrous materials. The burrs readily disperse via vehicle tyres and machinery and are spread in contaminated seed and produce. Water plays a minor role in the dispersal of seed and wind to an even lesser extent.

How do we control it?

Prevention:

Establishment and maintenance of highly competitive pasture species can be quite effective in preventing the establishment of Innocent weed. Preventing the transportation of contaminated stock, hay, seed, produce and machinery onto the property will greatly reduce the possibility of infestations of Innocent weed establishing.

Physical control:

Given that the seed of Innocent weed only remains viable for three years an effective method of controlling infestations is to prevent seeding through cultivation over a three year period. Often when cultivated at seedling stage repeated workings may be required to prevent newly germinated seedlings from reaching maturity. This may not be suitable for all soil types. Small and isolated patches of innocent weed can be easily grubbed out.

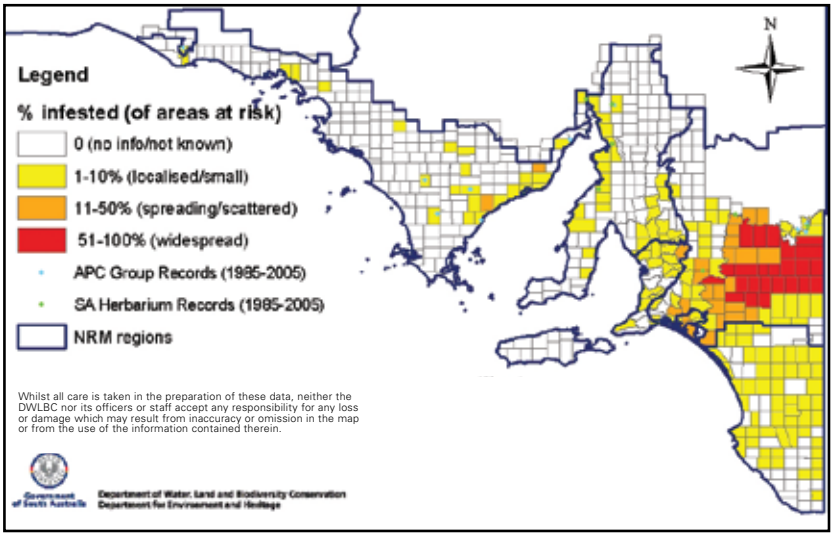
Heavy grazing by sheep also has the potential to prevent seeding. However it is not necessarily practical to confine sheep to the often small areas infested compared to the overall paddock size.

Chemical control:

Chemicals registered for the control of Innocent weed include Glyphosate, Paraquat, Fluazifop and a range of pre emergent herbicides suitable for certain conditions. When using any of the above chemicals please be sure to carefully read and follow the product label instructions.

Integrated control:

Often the most effective method of controlling Innocent weed is to develop an integrated control program involving a combination of prevention, physical control and chemical control.



Infestation Level of INNOCENT WEED *(Cenchrus longispinus & Cenchrus incertus)* **by hundreds in the State of South Australia** (2005 data)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		X	X	X	X		X				
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
							X	X			
								X	X		

x Occurrence given suitable conditions

Growth cycle of INNOCENT WEED
(*Cenchrus longispinus & Cenchrus incertus*)

Active growth | Flowering
Seed set | Germination

References

Parsons, W.T. and Cuthbertson, E.G. (2001) *Noxious Weeds of Australia* 2nd Edition, CSIRO Publishing.

Cunningham, G.M., Mulham, W. E., Milthorpe, P.L. and Leigh, J.H. (1981) *Plants of Western New South Wales*, N.S.W Government Printing Office.

Contact us

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Legislation

Innocent weed is declared under the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Act 2004.

Declared Plant Class: 2G
Declared Plant Category: 2

The following provisions of the NRM Act 2004 are to be applied throughout the State of South Australia:

175(2) – relates to the movement of plants on public roads within a control area.

177(1)(2) – relates to the sale of plants, produce or goods carrying plants.

182(2)(3) – relates to the obligation of an owner of land to control and keep controlled the plant and take any measures prescribed by the relevant authority.

185(1) – relates to the ability of the NRM authority to recover the costs of control on roadsides from adjoining landholders.

The following provisions of the NRM Act 2004 are to be applied in Council areas specified within the 'South Australian Government Gazette':

180(1) - relates to the notification of the plants presence to a relevant NRM authority.

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