

ANNUAL RAGWEED

Ambrosia artemisiifolia



Photographs are courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie

Description & life cycle

Annual ragweed is a native of North America that has become naturalised in South East Queensland and Northern New South Wales. It is a Class 2 declared plant in Queensland and a Class 5 noxious weed in NSW.

Annual ragweed is a short-lived upright plant, usually growing 1-2 metres high with slightly hairy, fern-like leaves. These leaves are initially produced in pairs in a rosette on the ground, but are later alternately arranged along the hairy upright stems. The small greenish flowers are not conspicuous, and are produced in elongated clusters on the upper part of the plant. These flowers produce large quantities of pollen when mature, making them appear yellow in colour. This pollen is highly allergenic and can cause respiratory and skin allergies such as hay fever, asthma and dermatitis.

Annual ragweed is fast growing and invades poorly managed pastures. It is also commonly found in bare areas, along roadsides and on creek banks. The plant establishes annually, germinating in spring and growing throughout the summer months. Flowering occurs during mid to late March, after which the plant dies. The seed is spread by floodwaters, animals and in contaminated soil.

Key features

- > Short-lived, with infestations establishing each year from seed.
- > Rapid coloniser of bare areas, roadsides and overgrazed pastures.
- > Pollen contains highly potent allergens.

Control

1. Small plants can be hand pulled. This method is particularly successful when controlling infestations around existing native vegetation.
2. Plants can be spot sprayed using a backpack spray unit. Refer to product label for rates and registration details.
3. Large infestations within open grassland can be controlled using a boom spray unit. Refer to product labels for rates and registration details.
4. The stem-galling moth, *Epiblema strenuana*, introduced for control of Parthenium Weed (*Parthenium hysterophorus*) reduces Annual Ragweed populations in warmer areas.

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