

Coffee senna

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Senna occidentalis

Introduction

Coffee Senna was introduced from tropical America and has since naturalised in most high rainfall areas of Australia. All parts of this weed are toxic and should be kept away from livestock as it can cause death of the animal if ingested. This weed is a feeder bush for weevils so it can be a harbourage point for these insects to reinfest a sugarcane crop. Other names are Arsenic bush, Septic weed and Ant bush.

Description

This weed is an annual to short-lived perennial shrub that grows to 1.2-2 m high. Leaves are alternate with 3 to 5 pairs of pointed leaflets. The leaflets are 3-7 cm long, lanceolate to ovate leaflets that are hairless except for scattered to common hairs on margins. Flowers are yellow and found in groups on short stalks near the ends of the branches. The seedpods are hairless, flat, straight or sickle-shaped, opening at maturity, with seeds transversely placed in the seedpods. The seeds are 5 mm long by 3 mm wide, ovate to oblong, flattened, and olive to dark brown in colour. The seeds are very fertile with each pod containing 20-50 seeds.

Management

Unfortunately, by the time this weed seeds the control window has been missed as the weed will die naturally soon after seeding. However, this does not mean that this weed should not be controlled, as it will compete with the sugarcane for nutrients and moisture. It just has to be done before seeding commences. All mentioned chemical control measures are registered for this weed and it is advised that you read the label of the selected chemical to choose the volume of chemical suited for your situation.

Post-emergent/ Recovery control

- Paraquat + diquat (eg. Sprayseed®).
- Dicamba (eg. Cadence® WG) + atrazine (eg. Gesaprim®).
- 2,4D + picloram (eg. Tordon 75-D) + 2,4D.

For an integrated approach consider where the weed infection may be coming from. Farm machinery may hide seeds from other blocks on your farm spreading the weed to new areas. Consider a good farm hygiene strategy of cleaning equipment down before entering new blocks or leaving blocks containing problem weeds to last if time does not permit inter-block cleaning of equipment.

For further information

For more information about controlling Coffee Senna on your farm please contact your local adviser.



- 1: Coffee senna flower (source: Srinivasa Babu).
- 2: Coffee senna seed pod (source: Jeevan Jose).
- 3: Coffee senna seedling (source: Virginia Tech University).
- 4: Whole plant (source: Virginia Tech University).