



# Whitebrush, Beebrush

*Aloysia gratissima*

Whitebrush is an aromatic shrub of the vervain family that grows from 3 to 10 feet tall. Leaves are narrow and pointed, pale beneath and 0.25 to 1 inch long. Leaves on flowering branches are small and smooth-edged, while leaves on other branches are larger and toothed. The tiny flowers vary from white to blue.

## Distribution and habitat

Whitebrush is frequent to abundant in Central, West and South Texas and grows northwest into New Mexico and south into Mexico. In far West Texas, this plant is usually restricted to draws receiving extra runoff moisture and have deep soils. Regions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10.

## Toxic agent

Horses, mules and burros are suspected to have been poisoned by this plant. The toxin, although unidentified, is known to be water-soluble.

## Livestock signs

Signs of poisoning appear to be nervous in nature and include general weight loss. Feeding experiments conducted by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station documented these signs in horses:

- Weakness
- Incoordination
- Prostration

These conditions developed in sequence beginning about a month and a half after access to whitebrush, ending in death about a week after appearance of definite nervous signs.

## Integrated management strategies

A valuable honey plant, whitebrush has minimal value as browse for other classes of livestock or wildlife. Horses fed well and given a properly developed mineral and nutritional supplementation program are much less likely to consume whitebrush.

If desired, herbicides can control this plant. For broadcast applications, apply Spike 20P® at 1 to 1.5 pounds a.i./acre in late spring to early summer. Use higher rates on heavier clay soils. For individual plant treatments, apply Velpar L® at the rate of 4 ml per 1 inch stem diameter or 3 feet of plant height.

Double discing dense infestations and reseeding treated areas has reduced whitebrush by 90 percent.

