

## Host-specificity of *Uromyces heliotropii*, a fungal agent for the biological control of common heliotrope (*Heliotropium europaeum*) in Australia<sup>1</sup>

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Common heliotrope, *Heliotropium europaeum* (Boraginaceae), a summer annual, is a serious weed of pastures in Australia causing poisoning in sheep and other grazing animals. The weed is native to Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions of Eurasia where it is attacked by several arthropods and pathogens including the rust fungus, *Uromyces heliotropii*. The host-specificity of a virulent and effective strain of the rust from Turkey was tested by inoculating 96 plant species of importance to the Australasian region using both microscopic and macroscopic observations of the reaction of host and non-host plants. The test plants included several members of Boraginaceae and related families as well as species of *Heliotropium* native to Australia. The infection was mostly limited to European species of *Heliotropium*, and would place no native species at serious risk. A risk assessment concluded that *U. heliotropii* was acceptably limited in its host range. It has recently been introduced to Australia for the biological control of common heliotrope.

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