

# Infonote RANGELANDS

## COTTON BUSH

*Ptilotus obovatus*

Various soils

### Indicator value

Cotton bush is best regarded as an intermediate condition indicator on its own. Populations of Cotton bush fluctuate considerably and responsively to seasonal change. Cotton bush is a fairly reliable good condition indicator in inland Mulga communities; closer to the coast, high densities of Cotton bush usually indicate fair and poor pasture condition, because the more palatable species in bluebush and mixed shrub communities have been grazed out. The more palatable and longer-lived plants, such as Felty and Flat leaf bluebush, Rhagodia, Ruby saltbush, Warty leaf Poverty bush and Mulga broom bush are more reliable good condition indicators than Cotton bush in inland Mulga communities.

### Forage value

Cotton bush is palatable to stock but is relatively short-lived and drops its leaves when suffering water stress.

### General description

Cotton bush is a variable dense silver grey-green shrub that rarely grows taller than 70 cm in the Gascoyne and Murchison areas. The coastal form of Cotton bush has considerable scrambling potential and may grow taller than 1.5 m when growing under other shrubs or trees. Shrubs commonly have multiple stems that originate at ground level. Individual leaves are oval and about 2 cm long by 1 cm wide with short stems. A dense felty covering of fine hairs gives the leaves and branchlets their silver appearance. It generally flowers in September and October. The flowers are up to 2 cm in diameter. The flower stalks are retained long after the flower clusters become detached and can help to distinguish Cotton bush from other plants with a similar leaf-shape and structure.



Cotton bush *in flower*.



Flower heads, leaves and stems with felty covering of fine hairs.