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Weeds to solve problems

WELLINGTON. — Common roadside weeds could be the answer to New Zealand's medicinal problems if a nuclear war cut off pharmaceutical supplies, according to DSIR scientist John Palmer.

"Our pharmaceuticals are entirely imported from the northern hemisphere," Mr Palmer said.

The Planning Council's recent study on the effects of a nuclear war on New Zealand showed that drug stocks would last three

to six months, he said.

There were many exotic weeds, common throughout the country that had medicinal properties, Mr Palmer said.

They would be used dried and had few side effects.

These included feverfew, common throughout New Zealand, especially on the East Coast, which was used to treat migraine.

Morphine and codeine to numb pain could be made from opium poppies. Digitalin, which comes from foxglove,

could be used to treat heart conditions.

Yarrow leaves as a herb tea could treat the common cold.

Horehound, which grew on dry pastures on the east coasts of New Zealand, could be made into cough mixture.

Dried twitch root in a herbal tea treated cystitis.

Marigold flowers treated inflammation of the lymph glands. And a teaspoon of dried valerian root in hot water acted as a sleeping pill.

Mr Ingham said these were some of the

exotic weeds which had been used in the past before synthetic medicines were manufactured.

Books had been written about New Zealand's native medicinal plants.

Herbal medicines were less precise in measurement and some treatments, such as chemotherapy for cancer and drugs for asthma could not be duplicated, Mr Palmer said.

However, herbal medicines were becoming more popular and were in use around New Zealand.—NZPA