

Herbicides for the Control of Noxious Weeds in Grassland

Well managed grassland is the cheapest source of food for cattle and sheep and an important aspect of good management is the control of weeds in the grazing sward. Weeds are damaging to the sward because they occupy space within the sward and use soil nutrients that could be exploited by more productive grass species.

While it is recognised the weeds reduce grass yields, some weed species can have other detrimental effects - buttercup can taint milk as well as reducing overall milk yield. Other plants such as ragwort (also called ragweed or benweed) are toxic to cattle and, despite the widely held belief, sheep are just as susceptible to ragwort poisoning. The practice of allowing sheep access to ragwort-infested pasture to assist in clearing it of the weed is definitely not recommended.

When weeds are permitted to grow unrestricted they will spread to neighbouring land. Ragwort and thistle seeds in particular easily spread as their seeds are carried easily by the wind.

It is important to remember that under The Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, ragwort, creeping thistle, spear thistle, broad leafed and curled leafed docks are classified as noxious weeds and there is a requirement on the part of the occupier of the land to have them destroyed.

The annual cutting of noxious weeds has little or no benefit as a long-term control measure though it may limit seed production and dispersal. Herbicides are generally very effective and, when used in co-ordination with other good sward management practices, should prevent weeds spreading to adjacent land.

IMPORTANT:

Farmers who are in the ESA schemes are restricted in what they may apply to the land. They should contact their Countryside Management Branch representative for advice.



Department of

**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

Herbicides treatments (continued)

Ragwort

Herbicide: For ragwort control (not clover safe) MCPA
2,4-D

For ragwort control (clover safe) MCPA/MCPB

Timing: Preferable to spray in May, June or July when the ragwort are actively growing with a large leaf area and before the plants have begun to flower.

Warning: Animals should be restricted from sprayed pasture in strict accordance with the instructions on the product label

Compiled by: Sustainable Crop Protection
Applied Plant Sciences Division
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
Newforge Lane
Belfast, BT9 5NW



Department of

**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

Summary Recommendations

(With selected examples from the 2008 UK Pesticide Guide.)

Docks:

Grass Only Swards

mecoprop-P (Various Products)
dicamba/mecoprop-P/MCPA (Various Products)
fluroxypyr (Various Products)
fluroxypyr/triclopyr (Various Products)
triclopyr/clopyralid (Grazon 90)

Grass/Clover Swards

asulam (Asulox)

Creeping Thistle:

Grass Only Swards

2,4-D (Various Products)
MCPA (Various Products)
clopyralid (Dow Shield)
clopyralid/fluroxypyr/triclopyr (Pastor)
triclopyr/clopyralid (Grazon 90/Thistlex/Blaster)
mecoprop-P/dicamba/MCPA (Various Products)

Grass/Clover Swards

MCPA/MCPB (Various Products)

Ragwort:

Grass Only Swards

MCPA (Various Products)

Grass/Clover Swards

MCPA/ MCPB (Various Products)



Department of

**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk