

Environmental Standard Operating Procedure 20

Ragwort Control

Ragwort is an invasive weed toxic to horses and livestock. Classed an injurious weed on the 1959 Weeds Act and the 2003 Ragwort Control Act, it is essential to stop Ragwort from spreading into pasture areas. Ragwort is also an important nectar resource for many insect species with some reliant on the plant for their survival. It is therefore important that ragwort is eradicated only in high risk areas.

Aim

In grazing fields or fields cut for hay, the aim is to eradicate ragwort entirely. In all other areas the intention is to prevent ragwort from spreading.

Environmental Impact

Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
Ragwort plants go to seed before treated or pulled.	High	All removing operations to be planned before the end of July.
Heaps of pulled ragwort going to seed.	High	Compost in an enclosed area and/or cover with plastic sheeting.
Affecting non-target species when applying herbicide.	Medium	Pre-works survey for rare or endangered plant species. See ESOP 15.



Delivery Method

- See diagram overleaf for appropriate treatment type.
- Pulling ragwort by hand or using spot treatment with herbicide should take place in Spring, while the plant is in rosette form, with a second treatment in the Autumn to target missed rosettes.
- Various herbicides can be used on ragwort including Glyphosate, Pastor, Grazon 90 and the natural product Barrier-H. Pastor is currently thought to be most effective by BA contractor (2012).
- Appropriate PPE is required as skin irritation can occur from handling Ragwort.

Environmental Standard Operating Procedure 20

Ragwort Control

Standard Procedure

- The risk that ragwort poses to livestock should be identified. Where high risk areas are found, immediate action should be initiated. Medium risk areas should be carefully monitored. Control in medium risk areas should, at a minimum, stop the area escalating to high risk.
- Ragwort should be clearly identified.
- When ragwort is pulled or levered all of the roots need to be completely removed for the method to be effective.
- If removing by pulling, use of a narrow pronged fork or special ragwort tool is recommended to avoid digging up clods of grass and exposing bare soil and to avoid injury to the back.
- Please refer to ESOP 15 before applying herbicide.
- If herbicide is used, this should be targeted on the rosettes in spring and autumn. Follow up visits will be needed in mid-summer to remove any flowering heads that have survived treatment.
- Ragwort should be composted in an enclosed area or left to rot under a plastic sheet away from grazing animals and least 10m from a watercourse. If this is impractical ragwort can left to dry out and then be burnt on site.
- If grazing animals are present in treated fields, prevention of consumption of the pulled material should be achieved by immediate collection of all ragwort into bags, trailer or placed in fenced piles.

Further Information

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123162956/http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/tag/ragwort/>

Consultation Required

- When composting more than 5 tonnes of plant matter at any one time contact the EA for an exemption from Waste Management Licensing.
- When burning ragwort contact the Environment Agency to register an exemption from Waste Management Licensing Regulations or the Agricultural Waste Regulations.

Ragwort Control – Decision Making Tree

