

Environmental Standard Operating Procedure

ESOP Name Giant hogweed control

ESOP Number 22

Revision Date 21/02/2024

Related ESOPs [2 Biosecurity](#)
[15 Herbicide application](#)



Aim

Giant hogweed is a large invasive non-native species, capable of spreading rapidly along river corridors. During control works it is important to ensure that no damage to species of conservation value occurs and the colonisation of new areas is prevented. This standard operating procedure aims to prevent giant hogweed becoming dominant and out-competing native plants, and to prevent it spreading to new areas.

WARNING - The sap of giant hogweed contains a toxic chemical which can cause severe blistering when exposed to sunlight. ALWAYS WEAR APPROPRIATE PPE.

Standard Methodology

- Spot spraying with glyphosate during the growing season.
- Any plants that have flowered or are likely to flower must be de-headed before seeds are produced.

Procedure

Pre-works

- Carry out a survey to identify if any species of conservation concern are growing in with the invasive species;

Operational

- If new, small outbreaks occur in priority areas the plants should be eliminated immediately. Spot treat with herbicide (See ESOP 16).
- Stands of Giant Hogweed growth adjacent to public footpaths and rivers should be treated as a priority.
- Spot spraying with glyphosate should commence in early spring when new plants have begun to grow. A dose rate of 6 l/ha⁻¹ is sufficient to kill treated vegetation.
- Sections should be treated at least three times during the growing season.
- Any plants that have flowered or are likely to flower must be de-headed before seeds are produced.
- The cut umbels must be removed securely from the area and burnt in a controlled environment. The plant should be sprayed again with glyphosate or it will attempt to flower again and set seed.
- Continue to check for re-growth and spread, until one whole year after no re-growth is seen.

Consultation

- If glyphosate is being used in or near water, an AquaHerb01 agreement must have been secured from the Environment Agency.
- Natural England assent must be in place before works can be undertaken on protected sites.

Risk Assessment

Hazard	Initial Risk			Controls / Safeguards / Precautions	Revised Risk		
	S	L	R		S	L	R
Existing stands could increase in size, outcompeting native species.	4	4	C	Ensure existing stands are effectively controlled	4	1	A
Affecting non-target species when applying herbicide	4	3	B	Pre-works survey for rare or endangered plants species and exclusion zones marked around these plants/review control options.	4	1	A
Failing to control before seeds ripen.	4	4	C	Ensure control measures are undertaken before	4	1	A

Matrix

		LIKELIHOOD				
		Very unlikely	Unlikely	Moderately likely	Likely	Very likely
SEVERITY		1	2	3	4	5
Low (minimal, short-term disturbance levels and negligible damage to native habitats.)	1	A	A	A	A	A
Medium (moderate, short-term disturbance levels, some damage to native habitats/species. Regenerates quickly.)	2	A	A	A	B	B
High (high disturbance levels over a longer period and displacement of species. Damage to native habitats. Significant time to regenerate)	3	A	B	B	C	C
Very High (Long-term disturbance with displacement/death of species. Significant damage to native habitats that takes a significant time to regenerate.)	4	B	B	C	C	C

RISK	
A	OK. Work to provisions in risk assessment
B	Proceed with caution. Dynamically review risks.
C	Cancel task. Approach project in a different way.