



Weed Management Information

Fireweed

Botanical name: *Senecio madagascariensis*

Weed Class: Class 4 noxious weed

Legal requirements: The growth of the plant must be managed in a manner that reduces its numbers, spread and incidence and continuously inhibits its reproduction.

Control options

Effective control of fireweed requires the prevention of seeding for at least four to six years and the elimination of sources of reinfestation. Maintaining dense competitive pastures minimises the likelihood of fireweed establishing in any numbers and is the favoured method of control on grazing lands.

Manual control: Seedlings and individual plants can be pulled up by hand where infestations are small and manageable and regular follow-up pulling is done. Ensure that all plant parts are removed. If leaving plants in the paddock make sure no parts are touching the ground as they will re-establish. Remove flower heads and seeds prior to discarding the plants, bag them and allow to rot down before burying or burning in an enclosed incinerator.

Cultivation: Repeated cultivation of seedlings following each germination is effective. Mechanical slashing should be undertaken before the seed heads have formed and, to be effective, must be done regularly and often to ensure successive germinations are prevented from flowering and seeding. Plants with seed heads should be collected and burnt.

Biological control: There are no known effective biological controls

Chemical control: Use a herbicide that is registered for use in NSW and in a manner and rate stated on the label (or a current pesticide order). Seek advice from a Council Vegetation Officer or your herbicide supplier. Please ensure the chosen product is suitable for the designated land use and situation. Please observe all environmental and safety cautions that are stated on the label.

Description:

Annual or biennial winter-growing herb to 70 cm high. A fireweed plant produces a huge amount of seed (about 30,000 seeds per plant).

Stems: Branched woody stems.

Leaves: The plant has mid-green leaves to 8 cm long and to 1.5 cm wide.

Flowers: Inflorescence a loose cluster of flowerheads. Flowers all year, chiefly autumn to late spring. Thirteen petal-like yellow ray florets with strap-like parts to 10mm long with 20-21 bracts underneath.

Dispersal: Most spread is by wind -dispersed seed. Long distance dispersal also occurs by seeds on animals, in stock feed or in mud on vehicles.

Habitat: A dry summer followed by autumn or winter rains leads to heavy infestations. Good pasture management is the key to effective control of fireweed – contact your agronomist for further information.

Fireweed contains a poison (Pyrrolizidine alkaloids) which can be toxic to cattle and horses. Sheep and goats have a higher tolerance.



Fireweed plant with flowers and fluffy seedheads

Photo: JM Iles and M Campbell

Other information on this site: Managing Weeds on the Far South Coast - Fireweed ([?link](#))

For further information: Councils Vegetation Officers Ph: (02) 6499 2222

Helpful websites www.southeastweeds.org.au
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds
www.ruralfutures.une.edu.au/fireweed/publications

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