

5.13. PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR RAGWORT



Description of the Pest

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) is an annual to perennial herb with yellow flowers. It can grow up to 1.8 metres high, although most plants are around 0.5 metres. The plant was introduced into New Zealand as a home garden plant from England in 1874. It escaped from gardens and as early as 1880 had become a major weed pest on agricultural land in most Regions. It was declared a noxious plant in Whangarei County in 1903.

Distribution of the Pest

The plant is found throughout the Region. The largest infestations are generally found on reverted farmland and land which is unoccupied.

Problems Caused

Ragwort is a very aggressive, prolific flowering plant. It can quickly invade land and become the dominant cover. It not only reduces the productivity of the land but is toxic to livestock, particularly cattle and horses. Sheep are more resistant to its poisons although deaths do sometimes occur.

Parties Affected

The main parties affected are landowners in rural areas.

Impact Evaluation

<u>Impact</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Potential</u>
Cultural	-	-
Ecological	-	-
Human Health	-	-
Soil & Water	-	-
Production	Medium	High
Public Infrastructure	-	-
Public Safety	-	-
Recreation	-	-
Trade (International)	-	-
Overall Regional	Medium	High

Regional Effects

Ragwort affects both pastoral production and animal health within the Region. Its widespread distribution means it is having a significant economic impact, particularly on beef and milk production. Over 30,000 ha are estimated to be treated annually at a cost of around \$200,000.

The plant has the ability to infest considerably larger areas than at present. Each plant can produce in excess of 50,000 seeds which can remain viable for 8-10 years. Its biological success rating is 15 (out of 21) and its weediness index is 14 (out of 24).

Need to Intervene

Ragwort is one of the main pest plants in farming areas. The plant is easily spread and a Strategy is required to limit its invasion of pastoral and productive forest areas. It is important that land which is clear or being cleared is not reinfested, particularly from neighbouring properties.

Goal (Long Term)

- To minimise the effects of ragwort on pastoral production.

Objectives (Five Year)

- To restrict ragwort to existing infested areas.
- To ensure the widespread distribution of biological control agents.

Tactics and Technical Methods to be Used

Education	Advice to landowners and other interested parties. Community meetings and field days. Media releases and publicity brochures. Research (biological control options).
Regulation	Rule 6.4.2.1 Clearance of Broom, Gorse and Ragwort Inside All Property Boundaries Rule 6.4.2.3 Clearance of Broom, Gorse, Pampas Grass and Ragwort From Quarries, Mines and Other Sites Rule 6.4.2.4 Clearance of Ragwort From Floodplains Rule 6.4.2.5 Clearance of Ragwort From Roadside By Occupiers Rule 6.4.2.9 Prohibition on Distribution and Sale of Pest Plants Failure to comply with these rules creates an offence under section 154 (r) of the Biosecurity Act 1993.
Services	Inspection of properties and enforcement of rules.

Tactics and Technical Methods Rejected

Economic	Subsidies on herbicides (not effective).
Regulation	Rules on occupier total control (plant too widespread).

Effects of the Strategy

Beneficial	Clearer pasture and higher production. Better animal health.
Detrimental	Possible damage to non-target species and herbicide residues on sites.

Cost Of Strategy

The Strategy is estimated to cost the Regional Council approximately \$18,000 each year.

Funding

Promotion and implementation of the Strategy is funded from a Land Management Rate. All of the costs associated with clearance on properties are to be borne by individual owners.

Management Agency

The Northland Regional Council is responsible for managing the Strategy.

Relationship of Strategy to Other Pest Management Strategies

The Auckland Regional Council has prepared a similar Strategy for its Region.

Monitoring and Reporting

The education and publicity measures will be monitored by survey. Progress towards objectives in the Strategy will be reported in the Regional Council's Annual Plan or LTCCP as appropriate.

Term of Strategy

5 years

Rules

6.4.2.1 Clearance of Broom, Gorse and Ragwort Inside All Property Boundaries

Every occupier shall maintain a strip of land inside each property boundary free of broom, gorse and ragwort where such land adjoins other land or a road which is free of the said Pest Plants or is being actively controlled by adjoining occupiers.

The pest free strip of land shall be of the following dimensions:

- i) Broom and gorse - 10 metres inside each boundary
- ii) Ragwort - 50 metres inside each boundary

6.4.2.3 Clearance of Broom, Gorse, Pampas grass and Ragwort From Quarries, Mines, Limeworks and Stockpile Areas

Every occupier and operator of a quarry, mine or stockpile of natural overburden or other similar material shall maintain the work area and a 50 metre strip of land around the work area or stockpile free of broom, gorse, pampas grass and ragwort.

6.4.2.4 Clearance of Ragwort From Floodplains

Every occupier shall maintain any land which is within a floodplain and which floods on average at least once each year, free of ragwort and shall take all necessary measures to prevent ragwort seeding on such land.

6.4.2.5 Clearance of Ragwort From Roadsides by Occupiers

Every occupier shall maintain the land between their property boundaries and the carriageway of any adjoining road free from ragwort.

6.4.2.9 Prohibition on Distribution and Sale of Pest Plants

- (i) No person shall distribute to other persons or offer for sale, or hold in a premises where plants are offered for sale, any pest plant which is subject to a Northland Regional Council Pest Management Strategy

or included in the National Accord List of Plants Banned from Sale & Distribution.

- (ii) No person shall distribute or offer for sale to other persons any agricultural lime, roading aggregate, sand or fill material which contains the seeds or any other vegetative material capable of propagation from a pest plant subject of a Northland Regional Council Pest Management Strategy or included in the National Accord List of Plants Banned from Sale & Distribution.
- (iii) No person shall transport or use any equipment, machinery or product which contains the seeds or any other vegetative material capable of propagation from a pest plant subject of a Pest Management Strategy or included in the National Accord List of Plants Banned from Sale & Distribution.
- (iv) No person shall plant, transplant or re-distribute any pest plant subject of a Pest Management Strategy or included in the National Accord List of Plants Banned from Sale & Distribution.