

CONTROL OF RAGWORT - BUACHALAN

4 March, 2008

Mary Wallace T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, today reminded all landowners and users of land that now is the time to take action to control the noxious weed, ragwort. Early spring (February - mid March) is the recommended period for spraying ragwort, with an appropriate herbicide, on lands destined for grazing or conservation for hay or silage. Ragwort plants become more palatable after spraying and consequently livestock must be kept off treated fields and fodder conservation delayed until all plants are dead and sufficiently rotted down, which is why early spring is the recommended spraying period.

This public awareness campaign is directed at farmers and local authorities for the control of weeds designated as noxious under the Noxious Weeds Act. Weeds that must be controlled in pastureland under the Act are ragwort, thistle and dock.

Minister Wallace said there were very good reasons for designating ragwort noxious under the Act, as it is poisonous to animals when grazed or when it is consumed in hay or silage. The fact that ragwort is poisonous to animals makes it an animal welfare issue and financial loss from animal deaths and restricted growth also occurs. Furthermore, she said that where noxious weeds are not controlled, their seeds spread to adjoining lands, thereby causing further infestation, to the annoyance of neighbours.

Minister Wallace noted that the Act provides for penalties for convicted offenders and said the control of noxious weeds is now a cross-compliance requirement for Single Farm Payment under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition. Failure to comply with this condition may result in a reduction in the Single Farm Payment.

She complimented the National Roads Authority on measures taken by them to control noxious weeds on the national road network. Measures taken consist of a "*special maintenance grant*" which is specifically being provided to assist local authorities in dealing with the problem of ragwort and other noxious weeds as well as the provision of "*Draft Guidelines on the Management of Noxious Weeds on National Roads*".

<http://www.nra.ie/Publications/Environment/>

In conclusion, Minister Wallace went on to say that farmers, developers and those whose lands contain ragwort should seek advice on control methods from their local Teagasc advisor or, alternatively, consult the Teagasc fact sheet on ragwort at <http://www.teagasc.ie>

Powers for the control of noxious weeds are vested in the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the Noxious Weeds Act, 1936.

The Act only covers weeds that adversely affect agricultural production. Weed species, such as *Japanese Knotgrass*, *Giant Hogweed*, *Rhododendron* etc. are classified as invasive species and come under the remit of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Ministerial Orders designating certain weeds noxious have been made from time to time, as the need arose.

List of weeds designated noxious is as follows:

- * Thistle, Ragwort and Dock - 1937 Order
- * Common Barbery - 1958 Order
- * Male Wild Hop Plant - 1965 Order
- * Wild Oat - 1973 Order

The reasons for designating them noxious are varied. Ragwort is poisonous to herbivores when grazed or consumed in hay or silage. Thistle and dock in grassland and wild oat in cereal crops reduce yields appreciably. Also, their seeds spread widely, mainly by wind, resulting in clean lands becoming contaminated. Male wild hop plant cross-pollinates with cultivated varieties, thereby reducing the quality of the latter. Common barberry harbours black stem rust, which is a disease that attacks cultivated cereal crops.

Under the Act, it is an offence not to prevent the growth and spread of noxious weeds. The owner, occupier, user or manager of lands on which these weeds are growing is liable, upon conviction, to a fine. In the case of fences and margins of public roads the local authority charged with the maintenance of such roads is responsible under the Act.

Under the Single Payment Scheme, farmers are required to maintain land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition as part of Cross-Compliance. One of the conditions laid down is that appropriate measures must be adopted to minimise the spread of noxious weeds. Failure to comply with this condition may result in a reduction in the Single Farm Payment.

Chemical Control of Ragwort in pasture areas

Herbicides work best on ragwort in the rosette stage of growth. Ragwort plants become more palatable after spraying and consequently livestock must be kept off treated fields, and fodder conservation delayed until all plants are dead and sufficiently rotted down. Given such restrictions on pastureland, the best window of opportunity for spraying, with an appropriate herbicide, is late autumn (mid Sept. - mid Nov.) or early spring (mid Feb - mid Mar).

Farmers, developers etc whose lands contain ragwort should seek advice on control methods from their local Teagasc advisor or, alternatively, consult the Teagasc fact sheet on ragwort at:
<http://www.teagasc.ie>.

Spot the 101 Habitats and Species in Clare

<http://www.clarecoco.ie/Planning/Docs/BiodiversityInCountyClare.pdf>

Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages

A Guide for Local Community Groups

http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/publications/conserve_wildlife/wildlife.pdf

Ragwort Facts(uk)

<http://www.ragwortfacts.com/index.html>

Ragwort: Yellow Peril or Precious Flower?(uk)

<http://www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/currentprojects/ragwort/ragwortyellowperilorpreciousflower.htm>

Ragwort Fact File(uk)

<http://www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/currentprojects/ragwort/ragwortfactfile.htm>

Groundsel, Ragwort(US)

<http://www.vet.purdue.edu/depts/addl/toxic/plant24.htm>

Helping to prevent the spread of invasive non-native species(uk)

Horticultural code of practice

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/non-native/pdf/non-nativecop.pdf>

Working with wildlife site guide (uk)

<http://www.ciria.org/acatalog/c567.pdf>

Code of Conduct for the conservation and enjoyment of wild plants (uk)

http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted_sites/bps/Code%20of%20Conduct.htm

The Flora of Ireland

<http://www.botanicgardens.ie/herb/census/flora.htm>

Ireland's National Plant Conservation Strategy

<http://www.botanicgardens.ie/gspc/gspc.htm>

Irish Wildflowers

<http://www.irishwildflowers.ie/index.html>

Genetic Heritage of Ireland

<http://www.tcd.ie/Botany/GHI/index.html>

Mooney Goes Wild

<http://www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/>

Suggest a link

Contact: info@aughty.org