

# RAGWORT

*Jacobaea vulgaris* syn. *Senecio jacobaea*

## Management programme

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive containment	<b>Sustained control</b>	Site-led
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## Impacts

<b>Economic</b>	Biodiversity	Soil resources	Water quantity/ quality
Human health	Social and cultural wellbeing	Amenity/recreation	<b>Animal welfare</b>

## Objectives

Objective: Keep ragwort from affecting nearby land clear or being cleared of it.

## Why is it a pest?

While ragwort is primarily a pasture weed, it is also commonly found in waste places, coastal areas, riparian margins, shrubland, open forests, and swamps. Once established, ragwort can spread rapidly and invade clean pasture. Heavy infestations of ragwort reduce pasture production, in turn reducing the farm's carrying capacity and imposing farm management costs on the occupier. It spreads readily over long distances via its wind-dispersed seeds. Seeds can also be spread via machinery and stock.

Ragwort is more apparent on dairying and dry stock properties, where it is harmful to grazing cattle, deer and horses causing liver damage (cirrhosis), photosensitisation (skin inflammation), jaundice and weight loss. It can also cause skin irritation and allergies to humans when handled extensively.

Cinnabar moth was released in the 1920s as a biological control agent for ragwort to reduce infestations of it throughout the country. Two other agents, the ragwort flea beetle (released widely during the late 1980's and early 1990's) and ragwort plume moth (releases began in 2006) are also helping to reduce ragwort infestations in New Zealand.

## Responsibility for control

**All occupiers are responsible for controlling ragwort.**

- Occupiers of transport corridors and quarries within the Waikato region are responsible for the control of ragwort on the land they occupy (rules RAG-1 of the **Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032**).
- All occupiers in the Waikato region are responsible for controlling ragwort on their property within 50 metres of a shared boundary where that neighbouring land is being managed for production values and animal welfare (GNR RAG-2). Occupiers need to be good neighbours and do the same so that their neighbour's control efforts are not fruitless.

**Ragwort is also banned from being sold, propagated, distributed, or included in commercial displays.**



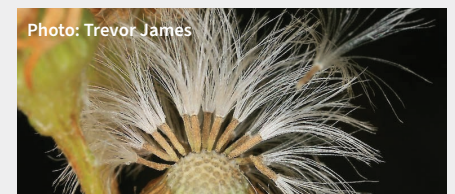
## What does it look like?

An erect biennial or perennial daisy, ragwort grows to between 45cm-60cm high (but can reach up to 2m). It has masses of yellow flowers. Juvenile plants look different to mature plants. Ragwort plants has an unpleasant smell when crushed.



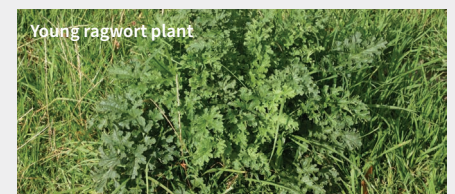
## Flower

- Bright yellow flowerheads (2cm across).
- Flowerheads are clusters of ray (outer petals) and disk (flat central flowers) florets.
- Flower stems can grow to 1.2m tall.
- Flowering is from November to April.



## Fruit/seed

- Parachute-like light coloured seed attached to fine hairs.
- The fine hairs open out, forming a fluffy ball (thistle-down).
- The hairs on each seed catch in the wind, aiding seed dispersal.



## Leaves/stems

- Young ragwort plants are a flat rosette of dark green leaves with large lobes.
- As plants get older and form a stem, the leaves become deeply dissected.
- Stems are purple.
- Flowering stems, and in some places, the whole plant dies in autumn.

# How can I control ragwort?

## Physical control

Pulling plants out and disposing of them by deeply burying, burning or composting (if no seed heads are present) is an effective method of controlling ragwort. Plants are best pulled at the flowering stage when the roots are much less likely to regrow. Mowing ragwort is not recommended, as it will encourage the plant to become multi-crowned or to become a perennial plant, making it difficult to control. Ragwort is poisonous to cattle and horses but not sheep, so stocking ragwort-infested areas with sheep will reduce the number of plants

## Grazing management

- Ragwort can be grazed by sheep or goats. However, cattle rarely eat ragwort seedlings or rosettes.

## Pasture species/cultivars

- Maintaining a dense, vigorous pasture can help prevent ragwort germination and establishment.
- This can be helped by appropriate stocking rates, irrigation and fertiliser.
- Superphosphate and urea applications have both been shown to increase pasture growth and suppress ragwort.

## Mowing or grubbing

- Small patches can be removed by hand or grubbing. However, plants can regrow from root fragments left in the ground.
- Pulled plants should be removed and burned so viable seed does not spread.
- Mowing or cutting repeatedly, in combination with appropriate fertilisers, can favour grass growth and help prevent ragwort from establishing.

## Ploughing

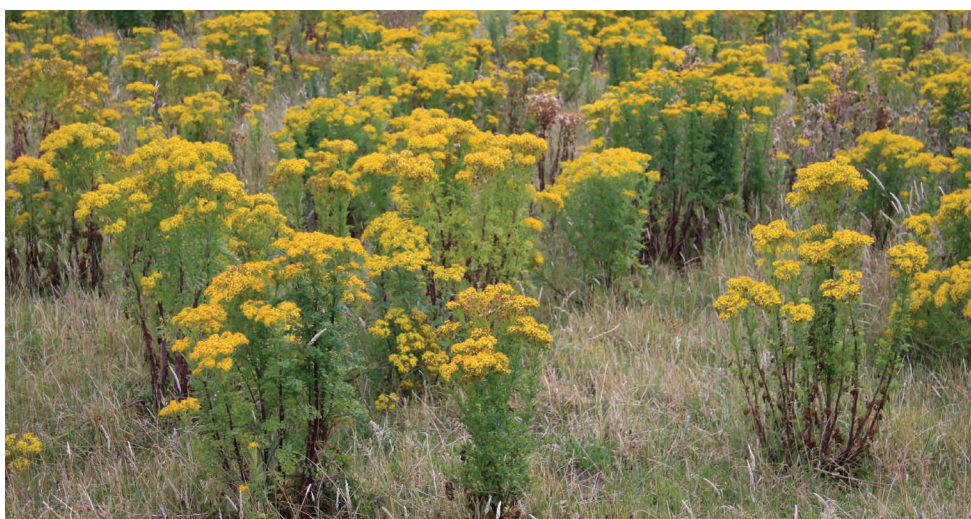
- For large infestations, deep ploughing followed by summer and autumn cultivations can kill ragwort plants, regrowth and seedlings.

## Integrated pest management

- Older plants may be hard to kill. However, one technique is to leave them to die naturally in ungrazed areas, followed by grazing, spot-spraying and maintaining a dense pasture to control the seedlings.

## Herbicide control

There are many herbicides that will control ragwort. The herbicide best suited to your property will depend on the level of infestation, the application equipment you have available and the stage of growth the plants are at. A summary of herbicides and applications can be found at [waikatoregion.govt.nz/ragwort](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/ragwort).



## More information

### Advice

For advice and additional information on control methods, call our pest plant staff on freephone 0800 800 401.

Chemical company representatives, farm supply stores, garden centres or the Weedbusters website can also be good sources for advice.

### Publications

The following publications are available from the Waikato Regional Council. Contact us to request a copy (freephone 0800 800 401).

- National Pest Plant Accord (manual of plants banned from sale, propagation and distribution) (free)
- Plant Me Instead! (Plants to use in place of pest plants) (free)

### Web

- *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032* – [waikatoregion.govt.nz/RPMP](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/RPMP)
- *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032* – [waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy)