

Hunter Region Priority Weed

St John's wort

Reduces productivity and impacts stock health



Photo: H Rose

Management guide



In NSW, weeds are regulated by the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*. All land managers have a General Biosecurity Duty (GBD) to contain the spread of weeds.

“General Biosecurity Duty means that any person dealing with plant matter must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable).”

The Regional priority for St John's wort is as an Additional Species of Concern. These are species that are of concern to the Hunter community or are a high priority for a number of current programs, though not feasible to contain or eradicate. In order to achieve this Land Managers are asked to:

Manage the weeds effectively and efficiently; work within existing widespread weed programs for strategic asset protection; and prioritise the application of the GBD to assist with management of these species. A person must not import into the State or sell St John's wort.

For further information contact your local Weeds Officer via **Hunter Regional Weeds** or visit **NSW WeedWise**.

Impacts

St John's wort is a serious pasture weed in the inland parts of the Hunter Region.

- Competes with pastures; lowers productivity.
- Large infestations reduce property values.
- Contains the toxin hypericin, which causes photosensitisation in sheep, cattle, horses and goats. The skin damage associated with this problem leads to weight loss, reduced productivity and, in extreme cases, death.
- St John's wort adds vegetable fault to wool.
- A plant may produce up to 33,000 seeds per year. Seed can remain viable for 12 years.
- Spreads by seeds and lateral root suckering and fragments rooting.
- Seed is spread over short distances by wind, but over long distances by water, machinery, humans, livestock and feral animals.

Management

- The best management of St John's wort is to reduce its ability to establish and spread through maintaining good perennial pasture cover, particularly in the autumn when germination is increasing. (Hunter Local Land Services can provide advice on pasture management).
- Prevent invasion through good property biosecurity. Quarantine new stock. Purchase certified seed and clean bought-in fodder, monitor feed-out areas. Ensure contractors and visitors' equipment is clean.
- Maintain healthy buffer zones around infestations.
- Utilise good grazing practices to maintain good ground cover and break weed growth cycle.
- Choose the type and breed of stock to be more tolerant of hypericin poisoning. Darker-skinned cattle and older sheep are better options to graze infested pastures.
- Know which strain of St John's wort you have.
- Biological control agents are available in NSW. Contact your local weeds officer to arrange an assessment of the suitability of your site and information on release sites for biological control agents.

Identification



Yellow flowers occur from October to January, about 22 mm across, with five petals. *Photo: D Campbell*



Yellow flowers and green seed capsules. *Photo: D Campbell*



Seed ripens in late summer/early autumn. The brown sticky capsules adhere easily to animal fur and other carriers for dispersal. *Photo: H Rose*



Leaves and branches always opposite one another on the stem. *Photo: H Rose*



Leaves showing oil glands, which appear as perforations when held up to the light. *Photo: J Kidston*



St John's wort can spread by suckers growing from lateral roots. *Photo: John Hosking*

Management Calendar

The calendar below outlines the management approach for a typical year.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Growth stage	Upright stem growth, flowering, seed set. Germination.			Seed fall, die back of upright stems.		Low, flat rosette/crown with spindly spreading stems, no flowers.			Upright stem growth, flowering, seed set. Germination.			
Action	Maintain good perennial pasture / ground cover (particularly in autumn).											
	Implement good biosecurity measures (e.g. vehicles, stock coming onto property).											
	Best time for herbicide control before seed set.						Strategic grazing of SJW to reduce presence and maturity.					Best time for herbicide control before seed set.

Recommended control options may vary according to your area. There are experienced professional Weeds Officers based in each Local Government Area who have local knowledge and can provide expert advice for your weed management situation. Contact your expert Weeds Officer at your local Council or at Hunter Regional Weeds.

Herbicide control options for all areas in NSW, including current herbicide registrations, are available for St John's wort at <http://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/135>.

Remember that all herbicide must be used and handled in accordance with the label or permit.

<https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/StJohnsWort>



Get the WeedWise app

Further information

For further information on how to meet your General Biosecurity Duty on your property, your best source is the expert Weeds Officer at your local Council or via Hunter Regional Weeds.

Contact Hunter Regional Weeds

www.hunterregionalweeds.net.au

Hunter Local Land Services

www.hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au

NSW Weed Wise

www.weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au

