

Hunter Region Weed

Fireweed

Invades good grazing land



Photo: N Edwards

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).”

Fireweed is an additional species of concern within the Hunter Regional Weed Management Plan. Protection of agricultural assets from the impact of Fireweed is the focus. In order to achieve this Land Managers are asked to: Mitigate the risk of new weeds being introduced to their land. Mitigate spread of the weed from their land. The plant should not be bought, sold, grown, carried or released into the environment.

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

Impacts

Fireweed is a serious pasture weed of coastal parts of the Hunter region.

- It forms a persistent seedbank, if not controlled before it flowers, and can rapidly take over heavily grazed, neglected or drought-affected pastures, competing strongly with existing pasture plants.
- Density is influenced by groundcover and competition, especially in autumn.

**These weeds are regarded as the worst weeds in Australia because of their invasiveness, potential for spread, and economic and environmental impacts.*

Fireweed can impact significantly on productivity:

Higher productivity

- No Fireweed
- Healthy, productive pasture
- Good livestock health and growth
- Good ground cover
- Sustainably grazed
- Timely and sustained weed control
- Lower weed control cost
- Higher grazing capacity

Lower productivity

- Fireweed present
- Poor quality pasture
- Reduced ground cover or disturbed ground
- Ill health of stock, liver damage
- Overgrazed or drought affected
- Untimely, inappropriate or no weed control
- Higher weed control cost
- Reduced grazing capacity

Management

- The primary measure for management of Fireweed is to reduce its ability to establish through maintaining good ground cover, particularly in the autumn when germination is increasing, and at time of seed set in late winter to early spring.
- Practice good pasture management. (Hunter Local Land Services can provide advice).
- Avoid having areas of exposed bare ground for extended periods of time, particularly when Fireweed is germinating in autumn.
- Fireweed is opportunistic and can take advantage of changes in the environment. Under favourable seasonal conditions, the plant may behave as a short-lived perennial, with some plants surviving for three years. However, most plants only live for one season.
- In good conditions, Fireweed is capable of germinating, growing and flowering during most of the year.

Identification



1. Germination occurs in waves with seedlings emerging 12–24 hours after rain. Seed density is highest in bare patches. *Photo sources unknown*



2. Seedlings have distinctly red stems, extending to the underside of the cotyledons and juvenile leaves. *Photo: B Johnston*



3. Subsequent leaves are produced alternately along the stem. Generally bright green in colour, fleshy and narrow, 2–7 cm long and have serrated, entire or lobed margins. *Photo: H Rose*



4. Flowers are small daisy-like, 1–2 cm diameter. They commonly have 13 petals and 21 bracts forming the ‘cup’ under the flower. *Photo: B Trounce*



5. Each flower can produce 50–120 seeds, with up to 200 flowers per plant.

Photo (above): B Johnston and (right) photo sources unknown

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	Dead.	Increasing germination >>				Establishment and early growth.			Flowering & senescence.		Death.		
Action	Maintain good ground cover												
	AVOID herbicide use.		Spray seedlings. Best time for application is two to three weeks after first main rainfall and before 10% of the seedlings open their flowers.			Spraying may be effective, but may require higher rates which has potential to cause damage to non-target species.			Spot spraying with herbicides registered for this use may be effective.				
	AVOID broad acre spraying.												
	Plan management strategies for next year.												

NB: Slashing or late application of herbicide may invigorate plants that otherwise would die.

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 Fireweed at <http://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/53>.

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

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



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

