

BLACKBERRY

Rubus fruticosus agg.

Introduction

Blackberry is a well-known nuisance weed in both urban and rural situations throughout New Zealand, including the Bay of Plenty. It can rapidly establish and, if early control is neglected, blackberry will grow to form impenetrable thickets. In pastoral situations it has the potential to reduce stock-carrying capacity and stock losses can also result from woolly sheep becoming entangled in heavy blackberry.

PEST STATUS

BLACKBERRY IS A BOUNDARY CONTROL PLANT PEST IN THE BAY OF PLENTY. OCCUPIERS OF LAND ARE REQUIRED TO CONTROL ALL BLACKBERRY PLANTS GROWING WITHIN 10 METRES OF NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES CLEAR OF OR BEING CLEARED OF BLACKBERRY

Heavy infestations restrict access to streams and provide an ideal harbour for pests such as rabbits and possums. Blackberry thickets can hasten deterioration of fencelines and during dry spells can present fire hazards. In forestry situations blackberry competes with new plantings as well as restricting access for silvicultural operations.

Origin

The blackberry commonly found throughout New Zealand consists of a number of closely related species, all European in origin. They have now become widely established in many temperate parts of the world.

Description

Blackberry is a scrambling, spiny, suckering, perennial with stems up to 8 metres long growing from a well-defined crown. It can form thickets up to two metres high and the leaves are usually in leaflets of five. They are dark green with a lighter underside and are shed in winter. The white or pink flowers are 2-3 cm in diameter and have five petals. The edible fruit is a berry, which ripens to black. Arching stems can root on contact with soil and seed is spread by birds, animals, water and soil movement.



Blackberry flowers from November through to April

Control methods

Environment B-O-P Plant Pest Officers are available to advise on control methods to suit individual situations. Whatever method is used, it is important that follow up control be carried out to gain the best possible long term result.

Mechanical control

- Tractor and Rotary Slasher – where the contour is suitable this method can be used in conjunction with oversowing of desirable pasture species, application of fertiliser and controlled grazing of stock. Follow up mulching and/or spot spraying of regrowth will be required.
- Hand cutting – can be used on smaller infestations, but is labour intensive and will require follow up cutting, or spot spraying.

Pasture and Stock Management

- Sound pasture management, including maintenance of soil fertility and pasture sward will help to prevent the establishment of blackberry.
- Goats have been used to control both small and large infestations of blackberry. Fencing is critical, and should be of an appropriate standard to be goat-proof. Attention to stock health is necessary and goats may need to be spelled from intensively grazed areas to maintain condition.

Herbicides

A number of herbicides are suitable for the control of blackberry. Herbicides may be applied by knapsack or mistblower for smaller infestations, or handgun and hose units for larger infestations.

Choice of herbicide will depend on the location of the infestation, the proximity of desirable species and the application method chosen. Spraying should be undertaken during periods of active growth, generally from late November through to April. When applying herbicide it is important that good coverage is achieved. Marker dyes may be used to help indicate the level of coverage.

Follow up treatment should be used to maximise initial control. This can involve a combination of methods including: spraying of regrowth, pasture management, burning and/or crushing, plus oversowing. Suitable herbicides and application rates are -

Roundup® or a similar glyphosate herbicide:

Knapsack; 150-200 ml per 15 litres of water
Handgun; 1-1.5 litres per 100 litres of water

Escort®

Knapsack; 5 g per 10 litres of water
Handgun; 35 g per 100 litres of water

Grazon®

Knapsack; 6 ml per litre of water
Handgun; 300 ml per 100 litres of water

Tordon® Brushkiller

Knapsack; 6 ml per litre of water
Handgun; 500 ml per 100 litres of water

Other herbicides that will give control of Blackberry include:

Amitrole
Touchdown
Trounce
Velpar®
Tordon 2G®

CAUTION: When using any herbicide please read the label thoroughly to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.



Blackberry can form an impenetrable mass

Further Information

For further information contact a local Environment B·O·P plant pest officer on freephone 0800 ENVBOP (0800 368 267)

Environment B·O·P offices located at:

6 Rata Street Mt Maunganui
1125 Arawa Street Rotorua
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Information in this fact sheet regarding herbicides does not necessarily appear on the labels of the products concerned. Environment B·O·P does not accept liability for any damages that may arise from use of chemicals at non-standard rates. Mention of product trade names implies neither endorsement of those products nor criticism of similar products not mentioned.

**This fact sheet was prepared by Richard Mallinson
Photographs courtesy of Auckland Regional Council**

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