

What to do if you have a problem with ragwort



This guidance applies to Scotland only.

Overview

Ragwort in Scotland is controlled under the Weeds Act 1959

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/grants/A-Z/WeedsGuidance>

In addition, the Scottish Government produced a useful booklet “The Scottish Government on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort” which you can download from: <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/resources.html>

The Guidance advises on how to deal with ragwort. It was created in 2008 under section 38 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 which gives Scottish Ministers the power to issue such guidance as they consider appropriate to secure the welfare of protected animals.

This guidance aims to prevent and control the spread of ragwort where there is a threat to the health and welfare of animals, especially horses that are particularly vulnerable.

This guidance does not seek to eradicate ragwort entirely as it pays attention to the needs of the environment and the countryside and ragwort is the food plant of at least 77 species of foliage eating insects.

Legally

Under the Weeds Act 1959 if injurious weeds, including ragwort, are growing on any land a notice can be served requiring the occupier to prevent the spread of that weed. Failure to comply with that notice is an offence.

Who is responsible?

Responsibility rests with the occupier of the land on which the ragwort is growing. When preventing the spread of ragwort it is expected that all adjacent landowners, occupiers and managers will co-operate and, if necessary, take collective responsibility to control the spread effectively. Where co-operation is impossible the issue should be referred to the local Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate Area Office.

Owners of equines and livestock have a duty of care towards their animals which means they must not subject them to the risk of ragwort poisoning. Under section 24 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 owners have a duty to ensure their animals live in a suitable environment and enjoy a suitable diet. A field infested with ragwort is not suitable for any grazing animal.

A risk assessed approach to ragwort control

The Guidance takes a risk assessed approach to ragwort control offering three risk categories as guidelines. However when assessing risk local circumstances such as prevailing winds, shelter belts and natural barriers should be taken into account.

High risk: ragwort is present and flowering/seeding within 50m of land used for grazing by horses and other animals or land used for feed/forage production.

Medium risk: ragwort is present within 50m to 100m of land used for grazing by horses or other animals or land used for feed/forage production.

Low risk: ragwort or the land on which it is present is more than 100m from land grazed by horses or other animals or land used for feed/forage production

What to do if you have a ragwort problem

1. If the ragwort is in the field you occupy, obtain a copy of the Scottish Government Guidance on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort and use the advice to clean the field up.
2. If you're grazing falls into the high risk category because of ragwort spreading nearby approach the occupier of that land and discuss the problem with them in a neighbourly way. You could also give them a copy of the Guidance and be as helpful and proactive as possible. You can get a hard copy of the Guidance by sending an A4 SAE with £1 stamps to Ragwort Guidance, BHS Scotland, Woodburn Farm, Crieff PH7 3RG.
3. If all reasonable efforts at dialogue fail and if your situation is a medium to high risk one as described above and causing grave concern then having tried all avenues of negotiation and having failed, contact your local Scottish Government Rural payments and Inspections Directorate Area Office. Details of the local offices are on the back cover.

Please note: The Weeds Act 1959 guidance specifies that 'a complaint must be received by an occupier of land or other person who may be affected by injurious weeds'. An example of an other person affected would be a person who is grazing animals on agricultural land which they do not own which is potentially under threat. Therefore SGRIPD need to be satisfied that the complainant meets this criteria to act. SGRIPD do not act on 3rd party complaints unless there is an animal welfare issue.

SRGPID area offices

AYR

Russell House
King Street, Ayr
KA8 OBE
Tel: 01292 291300
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E:SGRPID.Ayr@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

ELGIN

32 Reidhaven Street
Elgin IV30 1QN
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HAMILTON

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3 Wellhall Road
Hamilton ML3 9BG
Tel: 01698 462400
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KIRKWALL

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KW15 1AQ
Tel: 0300 244 9626
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THURSO

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Fax: 01847 895983
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GALASHIELS

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INVERNESS

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Tel: 01463 234141
Fax: 01463 714697
E:SGRPID.Inverness@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

LERWICK

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Lerwick ZE1 0HF
Tel: 0300 244 9599
Fax: 0300 244 9598
E:SGRPID.Lerwick@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

PORTREE

Estates Office, Portree
Isle of Skye, IV51 9DH
Tel: 01478 612516
Fax: 01478 613128
E:SGRPID.Portree@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

For information on the position in England & Wales please contact

British Horse Society
Abbey Park, Stareton, Kenilworth
Warwickshire CV8 2XZ
Tel: 01926 707807
E: welfare@bhs.org.uk

DUMFRIES

Government Buildings
161 Brooms Road
Dumfries DG1 3ES
Tel: 01387 274400
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E:SGRPID.Dumfries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

GOLSPIE (was in Lairg)

The Links
Golspie Business Park
Golspie KW10 6UB
Tel: 01408 634063
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E:SGRPID.Golspie@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

INVERURIE (Thainstone)

Thainstone Court
Inverurie
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Tel: 01467 626222
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OBAN

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STORNOWAY

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Contact us

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