



Broad-leaved dock – *Rumex obtusifolius*
Fiddle dock – *Rumex pulcher*
Clustered dock – *Rumex conglomeratus*

DESCRIPTION

There are several dock species in New Zealand, the most common of which (pictured) is the Broad-leaved Dock. Other species include the Fiddle Dock and the Clustered Dock. The information in this weed file is related to the Broad-leaved Dock, but the recommended control considerations and options are generally equally applicable to the other species.

The dock is a perennial weed that normally flowers and seeds in the spring and summer. It has large, waxy leaves up to 35cm long and 15cm wide, and grows from a single very large tap root system. Individual plants can grow to about 1 metre tall at flowering, during which erect stalks emerge to this height, supporting small, green-to-red flower whorls and also the fruit, which is a green-red nut form that subsequently turns to dark brown. The seeds produced are numerous and long-lived, which means that a large dock seed bank can build up in the soil if the dock plants are not promptly controlled.

The favoured growing location for docks is damp and poorly-drained areas in both pastures and crops throughout the country. The leaves of docks contain bitter tannins that make it unpalatable to cattle and horses, although it is usually readily eaten by sheep. This, plus the plant's preference for damper soils, often sees docks become a particular problem on dairy farms.

MANUAL REMOVAL

Individual plants are very difficult to pull out successfully due to the extensive and strong tap root system. The plant will in any case readily regrow from the remaining portions of a severed or broken tap root. Grubbing out is also rarely practical for the same reason; it is practically impossible to remove all of the viable tap root with a grubbing tool.

MOWING

Mowing paddocks with significant dock infestation is not recommended because virtually every severed stalk will regrow.

CULTIVATION

Heavily-infested paddocks that are cultivated for cropping or resowing will usually be seriously reinfested from tap root regrowth and also seedling growth. It is therefore essential that this be combined with pre-cultivation herbicide treatment (see Herbicide Control section).

HERBICIDE CONTROL

Docks, especially after the seedling stage, are relatively difficult to kill with many common herbicides. The best time to control docks with herbicides is in the spring, when the dock plant is actively growing, but before the seed head has developed. This is usually from October to December. It is very important to control docks in new pasture, due to the tendency of the rapidly growing dock plants to out-compete the immature pasture species.

Boom Spraying

- **2,4-D Granules** at 2.5kg/Ha will control seedling (up to 4 leaf stage) docks safely in new pastures. If the docks in a new pasture are not controlled at this early stage, there will be no viable control options until the grasses have matured. And by that time the docks will have seriously degraded the pasture quality. Note that **2,4-D Granules** will not control dock plants regrowing from old tap root stock.
- **Ranger** at 20g/Ha will control both seedling and mature docks in established pasture and in cereal crops. Subsequent spot spraying of some larger plants may be required to obtain total control. Best results are obtained by spraying 1-2 weeks after grazing, which ensures the maximum number of dock seedlings have emerged. There will be some yellowing and reduction in pasture vigour after using **Ranger** but complete recovery including of clovers will normally occur if growing conditions are reasonable.

Ranger at 20g/Ha should also be added to glyphosate sprays used for spraying out pre-cultivation if docks are present in the old pasture. Glyphosate used alone at the usual spray-out rates will not give adequate control of the docks.

Spot Spraying

- **GrassMate** at 6m/L applied anytime, but preferably when growing actively, to whole plant. Grass friendly, but will suppress clover.

Spot Treatment

- **Buckshot** granules applied dry at 2g to the crushed centre of each plant.

