

WEED FILE:

FATHEN



Fathen – *Chenopodium album*

DESCRIPTION

Fathen is an erect summer annual weed, and is considered to be one of New Zealand's most competitive cropping weeds.

It will grow to as much as 2 metres in height, although in some situations it can be much smaller, flowering while only a few centimetres in height.

Fathen has grey-green leaves growing to about 7cm in length with toothed edges. The lower leaves are lance shaped, while upper leaves are much narrower. The foliage often appears to have been sprinkled with flour.

Flowers are very small and numerous, but are quite similar in colour to the leaves, and so are relatively inconspicuous. They develop into tight seed clusters that are up to 30cm in length. The fathen flowers from December to May. It is then killed off by the late autumn frosts. Its seeds remain in the soil for long periods of time, and normally germinate between mid-spring and early summer.

Fathen is a particular problem in fodder brassica crops, where its ability to remove moisture from the soil and thrive even in dry conditions can significantly reduce crop yields.

It is also a common weed in new pasture.

Distribution is throughout New Zealand, and it appears in all types of cultivated land, as well as disturbed soil, waste land and in gardens.

Although fathen is suspected of being poisonous to cattle, it is quite palatable to humans and its cooked leaves and seeds are a tasty and nutritious pot-herb.



CULTIVATION CONTROL

Fathen is relatively easily controlled by cultivation, but this is of course not an option with either new pasture or fodder brassica crops.

HERBICIDE CONTROL

Fathen is easy to kill with many herbicides, so the choice will come down to what will do the job without doing unwanted collateral damage to pasture or crops.

Spraying

New & Established Pasture

- **Decision** at 50g/Ha (clover-friendly option).

Established Pasture

- **GrassMate** at 60ml per 10 litres of water, applied to actively growing plants by spot spraying, will provide control but will temporarily remove clover from the sward.

Fodder Brassica Crops

- **Replicate** applied at 350ml/hectare by boom spray (aerial or ground), in 100 to 300L water, with added crop oil at 500ml/100L. Best applied to fathen at true 2-8-leaf seedling stage.

Note that most of the fathen found in arable fields of the North Island will be resistant to triazine herbicides.