

# WEED FILE: GORSE

REVISED: OCTOBER 2017



## DESCRIPTION

Describing gorse to a Kiwi farmer is like describing a jockstrap to an All Black; hardly necessary (i.e. it's an uncomfortable fact of life and you already know what it looks like).

But for the sake of form, gorse is a woody, deep-rooted perennial brushweed that can grow to 4 metres high in dense, impenetrable stands. Its small green leaves are hard spines, and in autumn and spring it produces the masses of bright yellow flowers so beloved of tourists.

Alas, gorse also produces about 8,000 seeds per bush per year. And these seeds can survive in the soil for at least 30 years. So it's hardly surprising that controlling and ultimately eradicating gorse is a long-term proposition, involving a combination of several management practices.

## MANUAL & MECHANICAL REMOVAL

If stands of gorse are not too dense and mature, plowing or rotary slashing can be an effective approach. After plowing, seedlings and regrowth will require follow-up spraying with herbicide (see below). Slashing will need to be repeated, probably several times, interspersed with hard grazing by sheep, as well as some follow-up spraying as necessary.

Cutting smaller gorse with a scrub cutter or chainsaw and treating the stumps with herbicide, although labour intensive, is very cost-effective for isolated plants or small stands. Large individual gorse bushes can be successfully cut off just above ground level, and the stumps swabbed with herbicide (see below).

## BURNING

Gorse burns well and if conditions (and regulations) allow, burning can be a cost-effective option. But seeds are not killed by the fire, and even the burnt stumps will regrow, so follow-up spraying with herbicide is inevitable. Most authorities advise spraying with herbicide some months before burning, because the dying bushes will burn better.

## GOATS

Goats can contain or even eliminate gorse given time, but the property needs to be suitably fenced and carefully managed over several years. Up to 20 goats per hectare are required to make good progress.

## BIOLOGICAL AGENTS

There is a widely-occurring gorse seed weevil that has some impact during the summer months, but

is ineffective against seeds produced outside that season. Other biological agents are being developed and tested, and may prove beneficial in the future. Of course, they said that about the rabbit. And the possum. And the cane toad.

## HERBICIDE CONTROL

### Stump Treatment

- **MSF600** at 2g/litre of water (i.e. 30g MSF600 in a 15L knapsack, plus 30ml **SuperWetter** penetrant). Effective year-round, and on gorse of all sizes.

Cut gorse stumps as low to the ground as possible, and then spray all of the above-ground stump within 10-15 mins, ensuring the fresh-cut surface is thoroughly treated. Follow up for any regrowth or new seedlings at least annually.

### Spraying

The best option for dense and inaccessible stands. While gorse can be successfully sprayed year-round, the best time is during the flush of 'soft' growth that occurs a few weeks after flowering. The time when this occurs varies in different parts of the country, and even then varies a bit from year to year. It generally coincides with late spring, summer and early autumn.

- **MSF600** at 500g/Ha by air, in 400L water plus 2L **AirWet LF** penetrant.
- **MSF600** at 20g/100L by handgun (knapsack 5g/10L) plus **SuperWetter** at 100ml/100L water.
- **Grassmate** at 250ml/100L by handgun (knapsack 6ml/L) or 10L/Ha by air, plus **SuperWetter** or **AirWetLF** at 100ml/100L water.
- **Triclo** at 200-300ml/100L by handgun (knapsack 6ml/L) or 10L/Ha by air, plus **SuperWetter** or **AirWetLF** at 100ml/100L water. Warmer months only.
- **Glyphosate 360** liquid at 1L/100L, or **Granny** at 450g/100L, plus **SuperWetter** at 100ml/100L water.

### Notes:

1. **GrassMate** is grass friendly. **MSF600**, **Glyphosate G360** and **Granny** are not grass friendly.
2. **MSF600** is the slowest acting (takes several months) but the lowest cost. It's also the most popular.

