

## WEED FILE:

# SPURREY



Spurrey – *Spergula arvensis*

### DESCRIPTION

Spurrey is a common annual weed originally from Europe. It generally germinates in autumn and flowers in spring, but can also sometimes germinate in spring instead. That's what comes of invading the Southern Hemisphere from the North; you end up not knowing if you're coming or going.

It's a very fine-stemmed plant, and can be erect or sprawling, growing up to 30cm or so in height. Spurrey often grows very densely, causing a serious competition problem in seedling crops. It's also a common problem in new and establishing pastures and turf. In mature pastures it's less of a problem, because spurrey does not readily establish from seed when in competition with the established pasture species.

However, the seed of spurrey is particularly long-lived, and sites that have been clear of the weed for years can be reinfested after cultivation brings long-dormant spurrey seeds to the surface.

The flowers are distinctive, being white and star shaped, and about 8mm in diameter. The flowers grow right at the end of the stems, and a dense infestation of spurrey will, when in flower, appear almost as a snowfall, or blizzard of bright white. The flowers are fully open only in fine weather. Flowering is normally from September to May.

Stems are thin and rounded, up to about 40cm long, and have many sticky hairs. The leaves are green and needle-shaped,

around 25mm long by 0.5mm thick, and grow in whorls of about 10 needles attached at each stem node.

Fruit consists of small brownish egg-shaped capsules about 5mm long, containing many tiny black seeds. The roots of spurrey are fibrous.

### HABITAT

Spurrey is abundant throughout New Zealand. As well as in establishing crops and new pastures, it is often found in other cultivated ground, on roadsides, gardens, paths, waste and bare ground, and in dunes.

Spurrey grows well in acidic soil, so treatment with lime can be used to suppress its growth.

### HERBICIDE CONTROL

Spurrey can be a particular problem in new pastures because it is not controlled by the usual selective herbicides such as MCPB, MCPA or 2,4-D.

In crops, many of the crop-safe selective herbicides will control spurrey.

For best control of spurrey in both new and established pastures, and also in clover, lucerne, chicory and maize:

- **Decision** at 30g/Ha when applied to prior to the weed's 4th leaf stage, or at 65g/Ha when applied to larger plants.

It's important to add **SuperWetter** penetrant at 100ml per 100L of water. Water rate should be about 100-300L/Ha, with the higher volume required when the growth is dense.