

**WEED FILE:**

**WINGED THISTLE**



**DESCRIPTION**

Winged Thistle – *Carduus tenuiflorus*

The winged thistle is a winter annual, which means it usually germinates in autumn, goes through a rosette stage over winter and produces an erect flowering stalk in spring. The plant reaches about a metre in height in the flowering stage. It often forms extensive and dense infestations.

The leaves are spiny and deeply lobed, up to about 30cm long. They are green on top, with some faint white markings, though not nearly as prominently as the variegated thistle.

Flowers are pink-purple, and appear in clusters of up to about half a dozen per stem. The flower is individually about 20mm in diameter. Flowering occurs Nov – Dec. The plant dies after flowering.

The flower stems are prominently ‘winged’ with spiny ribs of leaf material running up the stem, hence the common name of winged thistle.

**HABITAT**

Pasture land especially hill tops and stock camps, arable land, waste areas, roadsides and lucerne crops. Distributed widely throughout both major islands of NZ.

In most regions of NZ the species is subject to Pest Plant Management Strategies.

**PASTURE MANAGEMENT**

Maintaining a dense autumn pasture cover will minimize seedling establishment. Overgrazing in summer can trigger major germinations of this thistle.

**PHYSICAL CONTROL**

Individual and isolated plants can be chipped or grubbed out.

**HERBICIDE CONTROL**

Best treated as a seedling or small rosette, in late autumn through to early spring.

**Spot Treatment (all growth stages)**

- **BuckShot** granules (about half a teaspoon) applied direct to the crushed centre of the rosette. Use more for larger plants.
- **GrassMate** at 6ml/L by knapsack or 250ml/100L by handgun.
- **MSF600** at 1g/10L by knapsack or 5g/100L by handgun. Very effective but will damage ryegrass and clover. Kills the seed if applied while plants are still flowering.

**Boom Spraying (seedlings/rosettes)**

Graze before spraying to reduce clover leaf and expose thistle seedlings. Leave for one week to freshen before spraying.

- **2,4-D Granules** at 1.5-2kg/Ha for seedlings and 2-3kg/Ha for rosettes before flower stalk development.
- **MCPA 750** at 1.5L/Ha for seedlings and 2L/Ha for rosettes before flower stalk development.

**Boom Spraying (large thistles)**

2,4-D and MCPA will not control mature thistles when used alone.

- **Cobber** herbicide used at 100-200ml/Ha in conjunction with either **2,4-D Granules** or **MCPA 750** as above, will control large and resistant thistles. Expect some pasture damage, especially to clovers. **Cobber** used alone at 1L/Ha is also effective, but clover damage will be severe.

**Weed Wiping**

- **MSF600** at 2-3g/L of water is inexpensive and very effective against erect thistles where pasture is low enough to permit reasonable thistle contact with the roller/wiper.

