

WEED FILE:

BROAD-LEAVED PLANTAIN



DESCRIPTION

Broad-leaved plantain – *Plantago major*

A short-lived perennial flat weed, very common in pastures and in lawns and recreational areas.

It grows from a rosette with broad leaves, rounded at the ends. The flower stalks are tall (30cm) and leafless, with a ratstail-like flower spike comprising the top half of the stalk. It flowers from July to April.

There is also a narrow-leaved plantain, and the differences between the two are fairly predictable from their respective names... narrow leaves versus broad leaves. The broad-leaved version also has a much longer (i.e. deeper) flower spike on each flower stem.

The presence of plantains in pasture has traditionally been viewed as an indicator that the pasture is getting run down and is due for replacement. Also that soil fertility levels may be low.

However, plantains are palatable to stock, and are readily eaten. Plantains are quite tolerant of low fertility, and the narrow-leaved variety has lately been included in pasture mixes, especially for organic and low-input farming systems. Additionally, research in NZ has demonstrated that plantains have a higher content of certain minerals (copper, zinc) than do ryegrass/clover pastures.

So in pastures where the maximum possible production capacity is required it's probably justifiable to eradicate plantains, increase fertiliser applications and perhaps even replace the pasture entirely. But in more relaxed grazing systems the presence of plantains is not necessarily a bad thing at all, and their popularity as a desirable – or at least tolerable – pasture component is growing. If you're spraying just for plantain control, it's probably not worth the time and expense.

In lawns and recreational turf however, the removal of plantains is almost always desirable to maintain a pleasing appearance.

HABITAT

Broad-leaved plantain is common throughout New Zealand though it grows less well in winter than does the narrow-leaved plantain. It handles low-fertility conditions well, and can be found in pastures, waste areas, roadsides, sports grounds and lawns. Broad-leaved plantain is also very tolerant of compaction, treading and waterlogging, so it's often found thriving in gateways, trampled places and sports fields.

PHYSICAL CONTROL

In lawns and sports grounds, individual plants (rosettes) are easily lifted and removed. The patches of exposed ground after rosette removal should be fertilised and reseeded.

HERBICIDE CONTROL

Selective removal from grass and turf is fairly easy, especially if clover damage is not a concern. Almost any broadleaf weed herbicide will control plantains well, especially when the plantains are at the seedling or small rosette stage.

In all cases add **SprayWetter** at 1L per 100L water, for optimum penetration and to reduce rain risk period.

Lawns and Recreational Grounds

- **MCPA750** at 2-3L/Ha in 200-300L water. Works best on smaller plants.
- **2,4-D Granules** at 2-2.5kg/Ha, in 200-300L water. Seedlings and small rosette stage.
- **GrassMate** at 2L/Ha in 200L water. Effective against plantains at all growth stages.

Pasture

If pasture is being sprayed out for renewal or cropping, the glyphosate will also take out all the plantains. If selective control is required, smaller plantains can be controlled as follows:

- **MCPA750** at 2-3L/Ha in 200-300L water.
- **2,4-D Granules** at 2-2.5kg/Ha, in 200-300L water.

