

Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board

Policy No: 27

Policy for the Control of Ragwort

Review	Audit & Risk Committee on 28 th September 2016
Board Approved	Board on 2 nd November 2016
Reviewed	Within 5 years

INTRODUCTION

The DEFRA "Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort" expects that larger organisations will have written policies for the control of ragwort on land under their control. This Policy was adopted by the Board on 7th July 2004.

Common ragwort is a specified weed under the Ragwort Control Act 2003 and the Code of Practice recommends it should be controlled, if practical wherever it presents a medium to high risk to animal welfare;

High Risk - Within 50 metres of land used for grazing horses or other animals or forage production.

Medium Risk - Within 100 metres of land used for grazing horses or other animals or forage production.

Low Risk - Greater than 100 metres from land used for grazing horses or other animals or forage production.

Section 9 of the Code of Practice states:

"When seeking to prevent the spread of ragwort it is expected that all landowners, occupiers and managers will co-operate and, where necessary, take collective responsibility for ensuring that effective control of the spread of ragwort is achieved".

The Board therefore will only undertake Ragwort control if:

- (a) All other parties in the area have agreed to collectively carry out control.
- (b) There is sufficient resource to undertake the work.

The Board's policy is only to carry out control of ragwort in exceptional circumstances.

Biology

Common ragwort is normally a biennial. In the first year it forms a set of basal leaves and overwinters; in the second year it sends up a single leafy stem with flower heads at the top. It flowers June – October and then dies. However if damaged, such as by pulling, it will act as a perennial flowering every year.

Methods of Control

Cutting: Method of last resort. It is used to reduce seed production and dispersal. Cutting will stimulate growth the following year.

Pulling: If root fragments are not removed, weak re-growth follows. Best done when ground is damp. A special fork is marketed.

Spraying: Can only use chemicals approved for use near or in water, they are 2,4-D and Glyphosate (Roundup). The Environment Agency must be notified.

Biological: Cinebar moth eggs and caterpillars are marketed.

The risk assessment carried out before control may dictate the method of control. In general pulling/digging will be tried first and monitored. Where this is not successful spraying will be considered. Other methods are not ruled out.

Health and Safety

Ragwort contains pyrrolizidine alkaloides (PAs) which are toxic to animals and man. Anecdotal evidence indicates that PAs can be absorbed through the skin and therefore protective gloves and trousers shall be worn when pulling or handling ragwort.

Disposal of Pulled Ragwort

Ragwort remains toxic when dead and becomes more palatable to livestock. Dead plants can still set seeds. Plants in flower should be placed in plastic bags and disposed of by landfill at an approved facility.