

POLICY: Injurious Weeds Policy
BOARD APPROVED: 21st September 2011
REVIEWED BY: E.M. Johnson
POSITION: Chief Engineer
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NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1st April 2027



1. Introduction

There are a number of injurious weeds that are native to the UK, and contribute positively to biodiversity. However, some of these weeds are poisonous to animals and/or can damage crops if they allowed to spread.

These injurious weeds are:

- Common ragwort
- Creeping field thistle
- Curled dock
- Spear thistle
- Broad leaved dock

The Weeds Act 1959 (that applies to control of Ragwort and also Thistles) places the responsibility on the land “occupier to prevent spreading of injurious weeds”. Where no action is taken, Natural England would be the enforcing authority.

Ragwort contains chemicals toxic to animals (horses) and humans. The plant only becomes palatable to animals once it has been cut, when consumed this can be fatal.

There is no law prohibiting these harmful weeds growing on the Board’s land, however the Board are duty bound to stop them from spreading onto agricultural land that is used for:

- Grazing
- Producing forage, like hay or silage
- To grow crops

The policy will address the Board’s responsibilities in respect of the land, banks and watercourse it owns, the land it lets to tenants and the watercourses in riparian ownership but maintained by the Board.

2. Board’s Policy

The responsibility for the control of injurious weeds in watercourses of riparian ownership but maintained by the Board, will rest solely with the riparian landowner.

The responsibility for the control of injurious weeds in or on watercourses, banks and land in the Board’s ownership will rest solely with the Board.

The responsibility for the control of injurious weeds in or on watercourses, banks and land in the Board's ownership, but let to a tenant, will rest solely with the tenant.

The Board will control injurious weeds subject to the availability of sufficient resource to undertake the work.

The Board will assist tenants with the control of injurious weeds subject to the availability of sufficient resource to undertake the work.

It is possible that the toxins can be absorbed through the skin therefore all staff should take necessary precautions when handling the weeds.

2.1 Methods of Control

There are several control methods available for controlling injurious weeds, the Board may implement one or a combination of the following:

- Spraying or wiping the plants with chemicals
- Pulling or digging out live, dead or dying plants
- Cutting back plants to prevent the seeds spreading
- Burning plants using a spot burner
- Encouraging tenants to manage livestock so they do not overgraze

2.2 Disposal of injurious weeds

Waste generated by control via spraying, cutting, or flailing will be left on the land to rot down naturally. Any waste generated by pulling and digging will be transported for disposal to an appropriately registered site, in sealed containers or sheeted trailers, to avoid seed dispersal.