

What to do if you have a problem with ragwort



This guidance applies to Scotland only.

Overview

Ragwort in Scotland is controlled under the Weeds Act 1959

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/grants/A-Z/WeedsGuidance>

In addition, the Scottish Government produced a useful booklet “The Scottish Government on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort” which you can download from <https://www.bhs.org.uk/scotland>

The Guidance advises on how to deal with ragwort. It was created in 2008 under section 38 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 which gives Scottish Ministers the power to issue such guidance as they consider appropriate to secure the welfare of protected animals.

This guidance aims to prevent and control the spread of ragwort where there is a threat to the health and welfare of animals, especially horses that are particularly vulnerable.

This guidance does not seek to eradicate ragwort entirely as it pays attention to the needs of the environment and the countryside and ragwort is the food plant of at least 77 species of foliage eating insects.

Legally

Under the Weeds Act 1959 if injurious weeds, including ragwort, are growing on any land a notice can be served requiring the occupier to prevent the spread of that weed. Failure to comply with that notice is an offence.

Who is responsible?

Responsibility rests with the occupier of the land on which the ragwort is growing. When preventing the spread of ragwort it is expected that all adjacent landowners, occupiers and managers will co-operate and, if necessary, take collective responsibility to control the spread effectively. Where co-operation is impossible the issue should be referred to the local Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate Area Office.

Owners of equines and livestock have a duty of care towards their animals which means they must not subject them to the risk of ragwort poisoning. Under section 24 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 owners have a duty to ensure their animals live in a suitable environment and enjoy a suitable diet. A field infested with ragwort is not suitable for any grazing animal.

A risk assessed approach to ragwort control

The Guidance takes a risk assessed approach to ragwort control offering three risk categories as guidelines. However when assessing risk local circumstances such as prevailing winds, shelter belts and natural barriers should be taken into account.

High risk: ragwort is present and flowering/seeding within 50m of land used for grazing by horses and other animals or land used for feed/forage production.

Medium risk: ragwort is present within 50m to 100m of land used for grazing by horses or other animals or land used for feed/forage production.

Low risk: ragwort or the land on which it is present is more than 100m from land grazed by horses or other animals or land used for feed/forage production

What to do if you have a ragwort problem

1. If the ragwort is in the field you occupy, obtain a copy of the Scottish Government Guidance on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort and use the advice to clean the field up.
2. If you're grazing falls into the high risk category because of ragwort spreading nearby approach the occupier of that land and discuss the problem with them in a neighbourly way. You could also give them a copy of the Guidance and be as helpful and proactive as possible.
3. If all reasonable efforts at dialogue fail and if your situation is a medium to high risk one as described above and causing grave concern then having tried all avenues of negotiation and having failed, contact your local Rural Payments and Services Office. Details of the local offices are on the back cover.

Please note: The Weeds Act 1959 guidance specifies that 'a complaint must be received by an occupier of land or other person who may be affected by injurious weeds'. An example of an other person affected would be a person who is grazing animals on agricultural land which they do not own which is potentially under threat. Therefore Rural Payments and Services need to be satisfied that the complainant meets this criteria to act. Rural Payments and Services do not act on 3rd party complaints unless there is an animal welfare issue.

Rural Payments and Services Offices

AYR

Russell House
King Street, Ayr
KA8 OBE
Tel: 01292 291300
Fax: 01292 291301
E:AFRAC.Ayr@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

ELGIN

32 Reidhaven Street
Elgin IV30 1QN
Tel: 01343 569500
Fax: 01343 569501
E:AFRAC.Elgin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

HAMILTON

Cadzow Court
3 Wellhall Road
Hamilton ML3 9BG
Tel: 01698 462400
Fax: 01698 462401
E:AFRAC.Hamilton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

KIRKWALL

Government Buildings
Tankerness Lane
Kirkwall Orkney
KW15 1AQ
Tel: 0300 244 9626
Fax: 0300 244 9625
E:AFRAC.Kirkwall@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

PERTH

Broxden Business Park
Lamberkine Drive
Perth PH1 1RX
Tel: 01738 602000
Fax: 01738 602001
E:AFRAC.Perth@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

THURSO

Strathbeg House
Clarence Street
Thurso KW14 7JS
Tel: 01847 893104
Fax: 01847 895983
E:AFRAC.Thurso@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

BENBECULA

Balivanich
Isle of Benbecula
HS7 5LA
Tel: 0300 244 9600
Fax: 0300 244 9601
E:AFRAC.Benbecula@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

GALASHIELS

Cotgreen Road
Tweedbank
Galashiels TD1 3SG
Tel: 01896 892400
Fax: 01896 892424
E:AFRAC.Galashiels@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

INVERNESS

Government Building
28 Longman Road, Longman
East, Inverness IV1 1SF
Tel: 01463 234141
Fax: 01463 714697
E:AFRAC.Inverness@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

LERWICK

Charlotte House
Commercial Road
Lerwick ZE1 0HF
Tel: 0300 244 9599
Fax: 0300 244 9598
E:AFRAC.Lerwick@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

PORTREE

Estates Office, Portree
Isle of Skye, IV51 9DH
Tel: 01478 612516
Fax: 01478 613128
E:AFRAC.Portree@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

For information on the position in England & Wales please contact

British Horse Society
Abbey Park, Stareton, Kenilworth
Warwickshire CV8 2XZ
Tel: 02476 840 500
E: welfare@bhs.org.uk

DUMFRIES

Government Buildings
161 Brooms Road
Dumfries DG1 3ES
Tel: 01387 274400
Fax: 01387 274440
E:AFRAC.Dumfries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

GOLSPIE (was in Lairg)

The Links
Golspie Business Park
Golspie KW10 6UB
Tel: 01408 634063
Fax: 01408 634014
E:AFRAC.Golspie@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

INVERURIE (Thainstone)

Thainstone Court
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire AB51 5YA
Tel: 01467 626222
Fax: 01467 626217
E:AFRAC.thainstone@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

OBAN

Cameron House
Albany Street
Oban PA34 4AE
Tel: 0300 244 9340
Fax: 0300 244 9331
E:AFRAC.Oban@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

STORNOWAY

10 Keith Street
Stornoway HS1 2QG
Tel: 01851 702392
Fax: 01851 705793
E:AFRAC.Stornoway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Contact us

British Horse Society Scotland
Woodburn Farm
Crieff PH7 3RG
Tel: 07808 141077
E: bhsscotland@bhs.org.uk
www.bhs.org.uk/scotland