

## REQUEST FOR COMPLIANCE SUPPORT (RAGWORT)

### Information Sheets

#### BACKGROUND

Ragwort is a weed of pasture and roadsides, although at times it can be found amongst the understory of bush land area and coastlines. It is an economically significant competitor of pastures and is poisonous to livestock when eaten. Ragwort is wide spread on Bruny Island, with small isolated infestations throughout the rest of the municipality.

Council and the Kingborough community have invested significant resources managing ragwort over previous years and this has been the subject of a program review in 2018. As a result of the review, some changes were made to the way we manage ragwort, including shifting the focus of ragwort control from eradication to containment, along with implementing new tools such as the request for compliance support.

This fact sheet provides information on compliance support for landowners. The full ragwort management review can be found on Kingborough Councils website

<https://www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/services/environmental-programs/weeds/>



Above left: Mature ragwort plant with flower heads.



Above right: Ragwort rosette- note the curly edges of the leaves.

#### REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE *WEED MANAGMENT ACT 1999*

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) is a declared weed under the *Tasmanian Weed Management Act 1999* (WMA), and is classified as a Zone B weed within the Kingborough Municipal Area. Zone B weeds are associated with the management objective of containment.

To fulfil the legal obligations of the WMA, landowners must control ragwort within 50m of property boundaries, waterways, drainage lines, roadways, stock routes and other transport corridors, with the aim of preventing spread to neighbouring properties. Control in this context includes herbicide application, the physical removal of the entire plant or the removal of flowers to prevent seed spread.

Further information regarding the WMA and legislative requirements for any declared weed can be found at <https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/invasive-species/weeds/weed-legislation-and-management-plans/about-the-weed-management-act>

## **PRIORITISATION OF COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES**

Weed management programs will always be limited by resource and funding constraints. As such, to maximise the effectiveness of available resources, prioritisation of various aspects of weed control is a reality and a necessity.

In relation to ragwort infestations, requests for compliance support will be prioritised based on the type of property that the landowner requesting assistance is protecting, as listed below:

### ***Threat to industry and economy of the island (threat level from highest-lowest)***

1. A property cutting hay for sale or stock feed.
2. A property engaged in primary production.
3. Any ragwort free property.
4. A property where the owner is actively controlling ragwort.

### ***Threat to natural values of the Island (threat level from highest-lowest)***

1. Any property where ragwort is impacting negatively upon any vegetation community, flora or fauna species listed under the *Commonwealth Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and/or the *Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*.
2. Impacting on other natural values not listed above.

## **BEFORE REQUESTING COMPLIANCE SUPPORT FROM COUNCIL**

The quickest and most effective way of dealing with any issue on an adjacent property is to foster good relations with your neighbour and seek to resolve the issues together.

Whilst Council undertakes education campaigns and provides advice to landowners on property management and associated obligations, it is worth recognising that messages can be more powerful when they are owned and driven by community members. As a result, some people are more receptive to receiving advice and information from their neighbours. Providing information and knowledge of the local area to new residents or assisting your neighbour to learn a new skill where possible not only fosters good neighborhood relations, but it also helps to build the capacity and resilience within your community.

If approaching your neighbour is not possible or proves ineffective, requesting assistance from Council in regards to enforcing legislation may be an option for you. Councils authorised weed officers have delegations from the State which enable them to require landowners undertake certain actions under the Act.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is important to note that whilst Council endeavors to also foster good neighbour relations and to keep any request confidential, it may still be evident that you have alerted Council to a particular problem. For example, if your neighbour only has ragwort near your shared boundary and they are required to treat the infestation to prevent its spread, it could be reasonable to assume that you have contacted Council about the issue. This is even more applicable if the infestation is not visible from the road or other places that Council Officers frequent.

## **INTERGRATED WEED MANAGEMENT PLANS**

It is a requirement of this compliance process that Integrated Weed Management Plans for your property have been provided to Council. If you do not have an Integrated Weed Management Plan, a template and planning guidelines can be found on Councils webpage. Alternatively, Kingborough Councils NRM Project Officer can have the template and guidelines sent to you upon request.

If you do not provide an Integrated Weed Management Plan, your request may become a lower priority.

## **WHAT IS INTERGRATED WEED MANAGEMENT?**

Integrated weed management (IWM) is the control of weeds through a long-term management approach using several weed management techniques. Techniques may include:

**Physical control:** The removal of weeds by physical or mechanical means, such as mowing, grazing, mulching, tilling, burning or by hand. The method used often depends on the species type, the size of the infestation, what the land is used for and the physical characteristics of the land.

**Chemical control:** Although the use of chemicals is not always essential, herbicides can be an important and effective component of any weed control program. In some situations herbicides offer the only practical, cost-effective and selective method of managing certain weeds. Because herbicides reduce the need for cultivation, they can prevent soil erosion and water loss, and are widely used in conservation farming.

**Biological control:** Plants that have become weeds in Australia are rarely troublesome in their place of origin. This is often because natural populations are regulated by a variety of natural enemies such as insects, fungi and bacteria that attack various parts of the plant. If plants are introduced to an area that does not have these natural enemies, populations may grow unchecked and allow the species to become so prevalent that they are soon regarded as weeds. In Tasmania, bio-control has proven to be a very effective component of integrated ragwort management.

## WHY USE INTEGRATED WEED MANAGEMENT?

By using several techniques to control weeds you reduce the chance that species will adapt to any one management style. For example, if herbicide is used over a long period of time, a weed species can build up resistance to particular chemicals. In addition, utilising different management options can reduce the cost and resources required to control particular infestations or promote better soils and healthier landscapes.

An effective integrated weed management plan should consider all available management control techniques focusing on the most economical and effective controls. It should consider how to achieve weed management goals without degrading the desirable qualities of the land, such as its native ecology or agricultural crops.

## RAGWORT BIO-CONTROL

Ragwort bio-control agents were first introduced to Bruny Island in the 90s to properties in Alonnah and have proven to be hugely successful. Whilst the ragwort flea beetle (*Longitarsus flavicornis*) can be an effective agent in ragwort control, land managers must understand how to integrate the beetle into their weed control activities. Mismanagement can have an enormous detrimental impact on beetle population numbers allowing ragwort to persist and spread. Further information on ragwort bio-control can be requested from Kingborough Councils NRM Project Officer.



**Above:** The ragwort flea beetle was released at this site in Franklin in January 1988, three years before the first photograph was taken. The second photograph was taken six years after release in 1994. High beetle densities were recorded during the two previous summers and no herbicides were applied after the release. (Photos provided by Richard Holloway).

## HOW TO REQUEST COMPLIANCE SUPPORT

- Complete the Request for compliance support application (ragwort).
- Submit application to Council. Be sure to also include your Integrated Weed Management Plan.
- A Council Officer will contact you to discuss your application and support options.



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