MADAGASCAR RAGWORT

PROTECT YOUR PLACE FROM MADAGASCAR RAGWORT

A serious threat to pastoral farming

Madagascar ragwort is more invasive and damaging than other pasture weeds.

» Has significant impacts on pasture productivity (declines of up to 35%).

» Is toxic and can be fatal to stock, remaining toxic even in hay or silage. No treatment is available for affected animals.

» Establishes extremely rapidly. A single adult plant can produce 10,000 seeds within six weeks of germination. It is capable of germinating all year round following any warm rain event.

» Is difficult and costly to control – there is no single approach that effectively controls all life stages.

» Is wind dispersed – while most seed drops relatively close to the parent plant, some of the seed can be blown long distances.

» Can spread via seeds in contaminated fodder products, by stock movements, on vehicles and farm and forestry machinery, and on contaminated clothing and other equipment.



How to protect your farm

Farm biosecurity and early detection and control are the best ways to protect your place from Madagascar ragwort.

Good farm biosecurity:

» Source hay, baleage and other fodder products from unaffected areas.

» Ensure any equipment, machinery or vehicles coming on to your property are clean.

» Use a 'quarantine paddock' for new stock. Avoid moving stock from affected areas.

Be vigilant:

» Make sure everyone on the farm knows what to look out for. If you see an unknown yellow-flowering plant in or near your pasture, carefully bag it in a sealable bag and confirm its identification.

» If unsure of the identification, place a good-sized sample with flowers in a **sealed bag** and bring it into your local Northland Regional Council office, or to your rural supplies Technical Advisor. **Be very careful** not to disturb seed heads or spread seed when controlling or transporting Madagascar ragwort.

Act early:

» Once detected, early and regular control must be undertaken to prevent plants seeding, or the infestation and seed bank can quickly become unmanageable.

» Hand weeding (pulling or grubbing) can be highly effective in newly infested paddocks with few plants.

» Pull plants carefully so they don't snap off at the roots, ideally while they are young and before seed forms.

» Plants should be placed in a sealable bag. Be careful not to spread any seed.

» Recheck the area every two to four weeks to control new plants before they flower.

Where is it found?

Madagascar ragwort is currently only known to be in Northland, and in south Wairarapa, near Ngawi. In Northland it is widespread in the Far North and around Waipapa and Kerikeri and is spreading rapidly. The approximate southern boundary of the known infestation area runs across from Pakaraka, to Kaikohe and Waima, with scattered infestations recently confirmed on the west coast south of the Waipoua forest.

What does it look like?

» Produces yellow, daisy-type flowers that are 1–2 cm in diameter.
» Flowers can be present year-round, but are most common in autumn and spring.
» Leaf size and shape varies but they are usually narrow, lance-shaped, 2–7 cm long, with finely toothed edges.
» Leaves are sessile (attached directly to the stem with no obvious stalk) and alternate.



Daisy-like flower heads.



Narrow, lance-shaped leaves with finely toothed edges.



Gravel groundsel (left) with bracts wider than the 0.8mm wide metal tool, while Madagascar ragwort (right) has bracts the same width or smaller than the tool.

Photos by John Virtue (Image 2) and Trevor James (Image 3).

Similar species

Gravel groundsel (Senecio skirrhoden):

Gravel groundsel is more commonly found on roadsides and gravelly/sandy areas, rather than in pasture. The most reliable way to tell the difference is by the width of the involucral bracts around the base of the flower head where it attaches to the stalk. Gravel groundsel usually has bracts that are wider than 0.8 mm, whereas Madagascar ragwort has bracts that are 0.8 mm or smaller. A 10x magnifying glass is usually needed to be able to measure this accurately.

Ragwort (Jacobaea vulgaris):

Has a similar yellow daisy-type flower but has more finely divided leaves, and grows as a rosette before becoming a much taller, upright plant.

Buttercup (Ranunculus acris or Ranunculus repens):

From a distance, a paddock of these yellow-flowering plants can look similar to a Madagascar ragwort infestation, but these are easily distinguished by their buttercup-type flower and leaf shape.

What do I do if it's on my farm?

If you have significant amounts of Madagascar ragwort on your farm, contact our Pest Plant Biosecurity team or your rural supplier's Technical Advisor for the best control and management advice for your specific situation.

Contact us 0800 002 004 or info@nrc.govt.nz

Find out how to identify it and prevent the spread

www.nrc.govt.nz/madagascarragwort

Northland REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā rohe o Te Taitokerau