

INFORMATION NOTE

Control of Ragwort on the MOD Estate]

Number: IN 03/08

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Who Should Read this: All DE Staff, Partners and Contractors involved in Land Management Maintenance on the MOD Estate	
When it takes effect: Immediately	When it is due to expire: 26 Feb 09

Document Aim: The aim of this Information Note is to remind DE staff, partners and contractors involved in Land Management maintenance of DE policy and practice on the management of Ragwort on the MOD Estate.

Background

1. Defence Estates is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate standards of weed control are maintained on MOD land under its jurisdiction. A number of Acts, particularly the **Pest Act 1954** and the **Weeds Act 1959** impose a duty on occupiers of land to keep their property free of animal and plant pests and weeds. The MOD is legally liable for claims submitted by adjoining landowners in respect of damage caused by failure to take effective control measures.

Ragwort Control

2. The Weeds Act specifies five injurious weeds: Common Ragwort, Spear Thistle, Creeping or Field Thistle, Broad Leaved Dock and Curled Dock. Common Ragwort is the only one of the five weeds specified in the Weeds Act which poses a risk to animal health. If ingested by horses, ponies and other livestock, Common Ragwort causes cumulative liver damage and can have potentially fatal consequences. The Ragwort Control Act came into force on 20 Feb 2004 for England and Wales and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) published a Code of Practice in June 2004.

3. The Defra **Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort** has a specific paragraph on Defence Lands. This paragraph outlines the MOD policy on the control of Ragwort on the MOD Estate. The paragraph states

'The Defence Estates (an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence) administer the defence estate and are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate standards of weed control are maintained on defence land under its jurisdiction. Where ragwort is present on defence land and there is a high risk that it may spread to neighbouring land used for grazing and/or feed/forage production the Ministry of Defence will take measures to control the ragwort and reduce the risk of it spreading. Some Ministry of Defence land has conservation status and requires grazing. In these circumstances, where a low risk has been assessed to animal welfare, animals may graze defence land where ragwort is present. The Ministry of Defence will take action to reduce this risk if it becomes medium or high risk. The Ministry of Defence will not control ragwort where there is unexploded ordnance present.'

4. The MOD policy also applies to Scotland and Northern Ireland. There is currently no specific Code of Practice for Scotland but further information can be found from Scottish Government on 0131 244 6273 (Policy) or from the respective SERPID regional offices. DE Staff in NI should contact the local DARDNI office in the first instance.

5. Contents of this information note will be incorporated into JSP 362 Chapter 9 which is currently being reviewed.