

PLANT PEST CONTROL

LAND PLANT PESTS

Blackberry: *Rubus fruticosus* agg.

Why are we worried?

Blackberry is a very invasive pasture weed, growing into impenetrable thickets which not only reduce stock carrying capacity, but restrict access to streams and water supplies. Thickets entangle woolly sheep, even causing death, and provide ideal ground cover for pests such as rabbits, hares and possums. In forestry and urban areas, blackberry can be a major fire hazard.

Blackberry is spread mainly by birds and often infestations occur around roosting sites on stumps, trees and fences which are generally difficult places to control growth.

What does it look like?

- Blackberry is a rambling prickly perennial, woody shrub, which grows in thickets up to two metres high, from a woody rootstock.
- Stems (canes) are hairless, red-purple with many thorns and can be up to seven metres long. Canes can develop roots wherever they touch the ground.
- The plant is deciduous. Leaves comprise three to five separate leaflets, each toothed along the edges, and are darker green on the upper than the lower side.

- Flowers are white to pink, 2-3 cm in diameter with five petals.
- The edible fruit is a berry 1-3 cm long which changes from green to red to black as it ripens.

Where is it found?

Blackberry is widespread throughout Hawke's Bay, growing anywhere from the coast to the mountains. It prefers damper sites and is more extensive north of Napier.

What's the best way to control the plant?

Chemical spraying is the common control. A wide range of registered herbicides are available. Some of the common herbicides used are Escort, Roundup, Trounce and



Stock can become fatally entangled in thickets

Tordon NF. Advice should be obtained from chemical representatives or Noxious Plants Officers prior to any spraying programme being undertaken. It is essential manufacturers' recommendations be followed and all safety precautions taken.

Spraying should be undertaken between January and May when the plants are actively growing and translocating food into the root system. Once sprayed, follow up management is needed to minimise the risk of regrowth. Management may include burning, crushing or slashing dead canes followed by oversowing with pasture species. Spot spraying of any regrowth must be undertaken as required.

Blackberry can be removed mechanically by dozing and root-raking. However, it is unlikely all root material will be removed, resulting in significant regrowth. The regrowth needs to be grubbed, spot sprayed or intensively grazed.

Biological control is not currently being investigated in Hawke's Bay. Intensive grazing of goats in small paddocks can destroy plants, but continual browsing may result in large rooting systems with little top. Any reduction in grazing pressure can result in an explosion in the number of canes.

For further information

If you think you may have this plant pest on your property, please contact the Biosecurity Plant Officers at Hawke's Bay Regional Council for advice and we will work with you to eradicate it.

Wairoa	0-6-838 8527
Napier	0-6-835 9200
Waipukurau	0-6-858 8636
TOLL FREE	0800 108 838