

Controlling Saffron Thistle

Much of the pasture country in the local area is plagued with saffron thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*). Due to the dry conditions of the last 12 months there is very little standing dry matter. With the recent rainfall we are seeing a huge germination of saffron thistles, so now is the time for control.

Saffron thistles are generally unpalatable to stock. Dense stands of thistle may hinder or stop stock from grazing. Spines may cause injury to the eyes, mouth and hides of animals grazing in this situation. Thistles die in late autumn but dead plants will stay erect for a couple of months. Fleece can become contaminated with seed and spines. A proportion of the seed remains dormant and can remain viable in the soil for at least eight years.

Spraying is the best short-term control option. The reduced dry matter has made this a lot easier as we can get greater coverage and spray rig drivers are able to see "obstacles" in paddocks that would normally be covered by standing summer grass.

There are two options for herbicide control. Spray topping saffron's is an important tool in limiting seed set. This should be done after the thistle has bolted (stem elongation) and before 10% of flowers are showing. Paraquat is generally used. Spray topping is usually carried out in spring. Once the thistles get to this stage, they have already limited pasture growth by competition. Stalks will still be present, creating management issues.

The second option is to use the spray-graze technique with MCPA which is considered the best practice, as spraying is done during winter, limiting competition with pasture species. Young rosettes are targeted with a low rate of MCPA. MCPA is closely chemically related to 2,4-D and causes the phloem to become plugged, preventing plant sugar movement from the leaves to the roots. This causes the plant to become twisted and distorted before starving to death. In doing so it creates high amounts of sugars in the leaf tissue making it highly palatable

to stock. When stock are introduced into paddocks (seven days after application) they target the thistles rather than pasture species. Damage to clovers is minimal.

In the long term the best way to control saffron thistles, is to increase competition from valuable pasture species by sowing improved pastures and/or increasing soil fertility. For more information please contact your local Pursehouse Rural agronomist.



Would like to invite our valued customers to join us at Ag-Quip on either 21, 22 or 23 August 2007 at site number ST13 for a FREE BBQ LUNCH to thank you for your continued support.

Also don't miss the chance to win one of the many prizes being offered.

We look forward to seeing you there

Leading Independent Agbusiness



New Faces to Pursehouse Rural - Welcome

James Cheetham



James commenced working with PR Ag Services in January to take on a trainee agronomist role based at Quirindi and Gunnedah. James comes from a grazing background near Goulburn and last year finished an Agricultural Science degree at Sydney University. He has a very keen interest in farming and in particular, farming systems on the Liverpool Plains. James has a passion for sport including rugby and cricket, as well as other outdoor activities. James is so far thoroughly enjoying his work and social interaction with PHR and the close Quirindi and Gunnedah communities.

Adam Bensch



Adam commenced as a trainee agronomist with PR Ag Services in May, based at Mullaley. He has come from the family farm consisting of a mixed wheat/sheep operation near Grong Grong in the Riverina and completed a Bachelor of Rural Science with UNE Armidale in 2005. Adam spent a few seasons on the harvest trail operating harvesters in the Mallee and Western Districts of Victoria as well as being involved in cotton seasons in Queensland. In 2006 he travelled to Canada to get a taste for the farming systems over there and how they differ to Australia, for example, soil testing in the snow. Adam to date has considered working with PHR to be a great experience, working with some of the best in the field, both clients and PHR employees.

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July Weather Summary

visit http://www.pursehouserural.com.au/services/weather_station.html

| Location | Average Temp (°C) | High Temp (°C) | Low Temp (°C) | Number of Days < 0°C | Rain mm | Average Wind Speed Km/h | High Wind Speed Km/h | Dominant Wind Direction |
|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------|---------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Cattle Lane, Willow Tree | 7.2 | 19.9 | -6.1 | 14 | 14.6 | 6.7 | 56.3 | S |
| "Murlow", Quirindi | 6.6 | 19.7 | -7.1 | 21 | 17.6 | 5.7 | 51.5 | S |
| Mullaley | 8.3 | 20.9 | -5.9 | 10 | 7.4 | 9.6 | 61.2 | S |
| "Dow Site", Breeza | 7.5 | 20.8 | -5.7 | 16 | 7.4 | 6.3 | 53.1 | NW |