Autumn Weed Control In Grassland

Autumn is a good time to control weeds in grassland

- Perennial weeds such as docks, thistles and buttercups are still actively growing but are now starting to send nutrients down to their roots ready for winter and so will take herbicide down with them.

- It's an ideal time to control seedling docks and thistles in summer / autumn reseeds. Waiting until they establish and get larger increases the cost of controlling them.

- There is plenty of grass which means there is less pressure with regard to stock withdrawal periods.

- Weeds in silage / hay paddocks will now all be at a similar size and in a good leafy condition so ideal for herbicide uptake.

- Spring is a busy time so better to do the job now.

New sown leys

- Tackling grassland weeds early improves sward palatability, productivity and reduces costs.
- Chickweed and docks can easily out compete young grass – controlling two leaf seedling docks in re-seeds is much easier than tackling large plants with extensive roots the following spring, so take the chance to get rid of them now.

- Envy is ideal for autumn weed control in new sown leys.
- Apply at 1.5 L/ha in 200 litres of water from the 3 true leaf stage of the grass.
- Controls both common and mouse eared chickweed.
- Envy outperforms straight fluroxypyr in fluctuating autumn temperatures but where frosts are predicted then ensure the application is made at least 14 days before cold weather sets in. If this is not feasible wait and apply the following spring.
- Envy has excellent grass safety, is rainfast in 2 hours, but will kill clover.
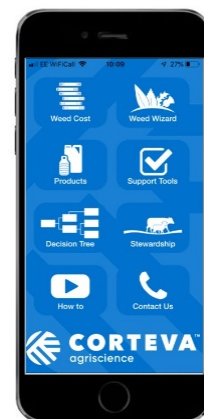
Established grassland

- Docks, thistles, nettles, buttercups and ragwort leaf up ahead of winter and become good targets for a herbicide spray.
- Buttercup control is traditionally done in spring yet there is usually a wider window for controlling them in late summer / early autumn. Also because flowering has finished, then control levels can be optimised. Use Envy at 2.0 L / ha in 200 litres of water
- Autumn treatments will be very effective as long as the weed is biologically active – so before the first frosts appear.
- Autumn control is an excellent opportunity for farmers to lessen the weed burden for the following spring which can help with farm workload and ease herbicide timings especially where you will be shutting up grass for silage and hay.
- In fields which have been cut for silage or hay, docks and thistles have regrown well and are in a perfect leafy condition for taking up herbicides. Controlling them now also allows the grass to re-colonise the spaces left by the dead weeds and sets the field up for a clean start next spring. Where the final cut of the year has been taken, there is no pressure to apply the herbicide at least three weeks before the next cut to allow adequate weed regrowth.
- Where docks are the main problem, Doxstar Pro will do a good job; where thistles are the main issue, use Thistlex, and for a mixed dock, thistle or nettle problem then go for a product with a wider weed spectrum such as Forefront T or the Pas·Tor Agronomy Pack.

Autumn use of Forefront T

- Forefront T should be applied to grazing fields but it can also be applied to fields after the last hay / silage cut has been taken. If hay or silage is produced from this field in the following calendar year, then it must stay on farm, along with any manure.
- Autumn is also a good time to control ragwort. Plants are typically leafy and receptive to herbicide uptake. Those that have flowered during the summer will be dying back, but ragwort is a biennial so there will be many autumn plants that are small and looking to overwinter so take them out now with 2.0 L of Forefront T in 200 litres of water.
- Use the Corteva Grassland App for Forefront T stewardship.

Best use advice

- Control may be reduced if rain falls within 2 hours of spray application.
- Spray when weeds are actively growing.
- Thistlex can be used up until 31 October, Envy can be used up until 30 November.
- Stay up to date with the Corteva Grassland APP – a comprehensive resource tool that's easy to use and there whenever you need it!