Broads Drainage Board

POLICY FOR THE CONTROL OF RAGWORT

Common Ragwort is a specified weed under the Ragwort Control Act 2003. The associated "Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort" recommends it should be controlled, if practical, wherever it presents a medium to high risk to animal welfare;

High Risk	Within 50m of land used for grazing horses or other animals or forage production.
Medium Risk	Within 100m of land used for grazing horses or other animals or forage production.
Low Risk	Greater than 100 from land used for grazing horses or other animals or forage production.

Section 9 of the Code of Practice states:

"When seeking to prevent the spread of ragwort it is expected that all landowners, occupiers and managers will co-operate and, where necessary, take collective responsibility for ensuring that effective control of the spread of ragwort is achieved".

The Board therefore will only undertake Ragwort control if:

- All other parties in the area have agreed to collectively carry out control.
- There is sufficient resource to undertake the work.

The Board's policy is only to carry out control of ragwort in exceptional circumstances.

<u>Methods of control</u>

Common Ragwort is normally biennial. In the first year it forms a set of basal leaves and overwinters; in the second year it sends up a single leafy stem with flower heads at the top. It flowers June – October and then dies. However, if damaged, such as pulling, it will act as a perennial flowering every year.

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The main methods of control are shown below. The risk assessment carried out before control may dictate the method of control used.

Cutting	It is used to reduce seed production and dispersal. Cutting may stimulate growth the following year.
Pulling	If root fragments are not removed, weak re-growth follows. Best done when ground is damp. A special fork is marketed.
Spraying	Can only use chemicals approved for use near or in water, they are 2,4-D and Glyphosate (Roundup). The Environment Agency must be notified.
Biological	Cinnabar moth eggs and caterpillars are marketed.

Ragwort contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) which are toxic to humans and animals. Anecdotal evidence indicates that PAs can be absorbed through the skin and therefore protective gloves and trousers shall be worn when pulling or handling ragwort. Ragwort remains toxic when dead and becomes more palatable to livestock. Dead plants can still set seeds. Plants in flower should be place in plastic bags and disposed of by landfill at an approved facility.