

WATER MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE

CONTROL OF RAGWORT POLICY

OPERATIONS

Review date: September 2021

To be reviewed every 5 years

Next review date: September 2026

Reviewed by: WMA Consortium Management Committee

Adopted by:

WMA Member Boards:

Broads Internal Drainage Board
East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board
King's Lynn Internal Drainage Board
Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board
South Holland Internal Drainage Board
Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board
Pevensey and Cuckmere Water Level Management Board

WMA Associated Boards:

Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board
Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners
Hundred of Wisbech Internal Drainage Board
Over and Willingham Internal Drainage Board
Swavesey Internal Drainage Board
Waldersey Internal Drainage Board

CONTROL OF RAGWORT POLICY

Contents

1. WHAT IS RAGWORT	3
2. RISKS AND CONTROL	3
3. METHODS OF CONTROL	4
4. FURTHER INFORMATION	4

CONTROL OF RAGWORT POLICY

1. WHAT IS RAGWORT?

Common Ragwort is a specified weed under the Weeds Act 1959 and the Ragwort Control Act 2003. The associated “Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort” recommends it should be controlled, wherever it presents a medium to high risk to animal welfare. The Ragwort Control Act 2003 gives this Code evidential status in any proceedings taken under the Weeds Act 1959.

Section 9 of the Code of Practice states:

“Responsibility for control rests with the occupier of the land on which ragwort is growing. 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”.

2. RISKS AND CONTROL

Occupiers of all land, including uncultivated land, derelict and waste areas, should be vigilant for the presence of ragwort. Action to prevent its spread should be taken where ragwort poses a high risk to land used for grazing or forage production.

The risk assessments described within the Code are as follows:

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 100m from land used for grazing horses or other animals or forage production.

The Board’s policy is only to carry out control of ragwort or where the plant is found to be growing on IDB owned land, where there is a demonstrable high or medium risk to animals or pasture land; in accordance with Section 16 of the Code of Practice (Action to be taken by other Owners/Occupiers of Land).

However, in exceptional circumstances, the Board may undertake Ragwort control if:

- All other parties in the local area have agreed to collectively carry out control.

CONTROL OF RAGWORT POLICY

and:

- There is sufficient resource to undertake the work.

In this instance, various methods of control may be considered.

3. METHODS OF CONTROL

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.

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. However, 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	Where spraying near water, the IDB can only use chemicals approved for use near or in water, such as Glyphosate (Roundup Biactive). An Environment Agency herbicide license must be applied for in this instance
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 placed in plastic bags and disposed of by landfill at an approved facility.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further control information can be found within the Code of Practice “How to prevent the spread of Ragwort” document.