

Code of Best Practice No. 6 Using Herbicides in National Conservation Areas

This Code of Best Practice doesn't provide exact solutions to the problems of managing grass, weeds and woody weeds in National Conservation Areas but following its practical guidance will help to protect sprayers, members of the public and animals from the potentially harmful effects of herbicides.

The main risks

Herbicides are valuable tools that aid forest establishment and production but only when used in a responsible manner. A herbicide is a poison which when misused can cause considerable harm. The main risks when applying herbicides in conservation areas are to:

- The person spraying the herbicide, if they don't take care
- Endemic plants and animals
- Users of the area being sprayed such as children, pets and other animals
- Everyone downstream through contamination of water courses with herbicides

This code of practice is intended to guide you in applying herbicides to avoid these harmful effects.

Who is this code of practice for?

For government employees or contractors spraying herbicides in National Conservation Areas to control weeds, woody weeds and stumps in these areas. This includes **road verges** both in and outside designated conservation areas.

Good practice spraying herbicides on roads and in public areas

- Before spraying, **assess the area** to determine how to minimise the risk to non-target species such as endemics: if you are not sure ask EMD or ANRD to help you.
- Avoid spraying **ferns** along road verges.
- Make sure the spray doesn't **drift** outside the target area, onto native and endemic species.
- Put up **clearly visible signs**, at least 8" x 12" in size, "CAUTION – SPRAYED GRASS /WOODY WEEDS" at all vehicular and pedestrian access points into the area sprayed, and leave them for at least 4 weeks after treatment.
- Where-ever possible **use spot treatments** such as cut & paint, basal bark treatment of cut stumps or 'cut, drill, and ecoplug'. Spraying poses a high risk to non-target species.
- If spraying **woody weeds** which exceed 40cm in height cut them to ground level and spray only when they re-sprout green shoots.
- **Don't cut the grass or weeds** before you spray (unless they exceed 40cm in height, in which case cut them and wait for them to re-sprout) as herbicides are designed to work on actively growing plants.

Aim to spray woody weeds before they exceed 40cm in height, and weeds before they flower and set seed.

Look out for non-target species such as native ferns, especially along road verges.

Things to look out for

- Are there any non-target species such as **ferns** or other **native plants** which could get sprayed? Make sure you avoid spraying them, spot-spray target weeds.
- Is there a **stream or other water course** nearby? Leave a 2m protection zone along the banks.
- Does the **public** use the area you are going to spray? Keep them away from the area for at least 2 weeks after treatment.

The basics

- Always **read the label** and follow the instructions for dose rate, frequency of application, and the personal protective equipment required.
- Take care when **mixing** herbicides for application, do this away from sensitive areas. Always mix herbicide so that spills can be contained.
- Avoid walking through **wet vegetation** you've just sprayed, you're poisoning yourself.
- Also avoid walking through **unsprayed vegetation** after applying herbicides while wearing the same coveralls or protective clothing.
- Don't spray if it is **too windy, too hot or too wet**. You are only wasting effort and money and could cause harm through drift.
- Be careful if spraying on **steep or very rough terrain**, the weight of the sprayer can pull you over.
- Dispose of **rinsings** from the knapsack sprayer on or at the edge of the area treated, but avoid exceeding the recommended dose rate on the target itself.
- Store herbicides in a lockable store away from food stuffs, and out of the reach of children and pets.

Advice and further information

- Contact lourens-malan@enrd.gov.sh for advice on assessing risk to native and endemic species.
- Contact the Farmer Support Team or Pest Control Services Officer at ANRD on 24724 for advice on using herbicides in general.
- UK Pesticides page: <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides>