

Code of Best Practice No. 3 Using Herbicides in Forest Plantations

This Code of Best Practice is provided to help government employees and contractors. It doesn't provide exact solutions to the problems of managing grass, weeds and woody weeds but following its practical guidance will help to protect sprayers, members of the public and livestock 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 is formulated to kill a particular thing, such as grass, weeds or woody weeds. When misused they can cause considerable harm. The main risks when applying herbicides in forestry plantations are to:

- The person spraying the herbicide, if they are not using the right protective equipment
- Users of the area being sprayed such as children, dogs, livestock and wild 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 forestry plantations to control woody weeds and stumps in these areas. It can also include grasses.

Good practice in forestry plantations

- 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 possible, make sure the spray doesn't **drift** onto fodder species to avoid accidentally poisoning livestock.
- If there is a risk of spray hitting **fodder species**, make sure you put up warning signs at this point.
- Where **woody weeds** exceed 40cm in height you need to cut these 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) as herbicides are designed to work on actively growing plants.

Woody weeds can be of various types, the main three forestry species being whiteweed, bilberry and regenerating blackwood. Aim to spray woody weeds before they exceed 40cm in height.

Things to look out for

- Has the area been recently restocked with **young forestry trees**? If so make sure that a shield is used to protect them from drift.
- Be aware of **endemic tree species** growing throughout the forest; avoid accidental damage of these trees.
- Is there a **stream or other water course** nearby? Don't let your herbicides poison the water supplies, leave a 2m protection zone along the banks of the stream or pond.
- Do **pets** use the area you are going to spray? Make sure you protect them by keeping them away from the area for at least 4 weeks after treatment.
- Do **people** collect wood chips in the area? Make sure you have clearly marked the access points with warning signs.

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** the herbicide for application, **avoid spilling** any concentrated chemical onto the forest soils and always mix herbicide so that spills can be contained.
- Make sure you are using the right **personal protective equipment** for the product.
- Avoid walking through **wet vegetation** you've just sprayed, you're poisoning yourself.
- Also avoid walking through **unsprayed vegetation** after applying a herbicide 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.
- Return all **unused herbicide** and signs along with your spray can to the Forest Section, ANRD on completion of your contract.

Advice and further information

- Contact the Forestry Officer at ANRD on 4724 for advice on herbicides and application rates.
- There is a wealth of information available on the internet on all aspects of plant protection. For information on herbicides check out:
 - UK Pesticides page:
<http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides>