

# Fireweed

## What is it?

Fireweed is an introduced plant originating from South Africa.

Fireweed is an aggressive weed that will compete with pasture plants for nutrients and moisture. Stock will not readily eat fireweed, ingestion is usually accidental where animals are grazing close to Fireweed plants. It is reported to have caused fatalities in stock. This seems to be in situations where animals are grazing continuously in areas where infestations occur.

## What does it look like?

Fireweed is a lay-lying to erect herb depending on conditions, growing to 10-75 cm high. It can be multi branched, and leaf shape is variable. Flowering occurs throughout the year although peak time is winter to early spring. It produces numerous seeds that can be carried long distances in the wind. Seeds can survive for some time before germinating, so any control program will need to continue for a number of years. Note: there are native species that are similar in appearance but do not cause problems.

## Control Measures

Physical control:

Slashing will reduce the top growth of the plants, but as fireweed is a perennial plant it will continue to grow and produce seeds. As the plant has a long flowering period, frequent slashing is needed to prevent seeding. In small areas, hand removal can be effective. Removed plants should be placed in bags and left to completely dry out.

### Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (January 2004). Users are reminded of the need to ensure that any product purchased for the control of Fireweed is registered for that purpose. The author cannot take responsibility for any changes, or modifications, that are made to product registration or requirements that may occur after January 2004.

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### Fireweed

*Senecio madagascariensis*  
Not a Declared Noxious Plant in this region.



### Herbicide control:

There are several herbicides registered for the control of fireweed. The main consideration in choosing a herbicide is the situation in which the infestation occurs, and the protection of nontarget plants. For general pasture situations, herbicides containing *Bromoxinil* will give good control. Note: this will not prevent seeds in the soil germinating at a later date. Follow up applications will be required.

If pastures are degraded, an integrated program may be more beneficial in the long term, where pasture improvement and the use of herbicides is required.