



# VELVETLEAF FARM MANAGEMENT

Velvetleaf has been discovered in fodder beet crops in the North and South Islands. MPI is working with primary sector organisations and regional councils to locate this pest weed and help contain its spread.

## WHAT IS VELVETLEAF?

Velvetleaf is an annual broad-leaved weed that grows up to 2.5 metres tall\*. Its flowers are about 3cm across, and are present from spring through autumn. The plant has distinctive seedpods, about 2.5cm in diameter.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

To help protect your property, check for velvetleaf. If you find it, **contact MPI on 0800 80 99 66**.

### If the plants have no seeds or if seed pods are green

- » Record the location of the plant/s so it is easy to find again for future monitoring.
- » Pull out the plant. Bag the full plant – using a large bag (e.g. fertiliser bag or sack).
- » Dispose of the bagged plant/s by deep burial (at least 1m) e.g. your offal pit. You can contact your local regional council for advice.

### If the seed pods have turned black

- » Carefully place a large bag (like a fertiliser bag or sack) over the plant's seed capsules and tie the bag tightly around the stem. It is important to make sure all seed heads are contained within the bag.
- » Bend the velvetleaf plant in half so that seeds cannot escape out of the neck of the bag.
- » Carefully pull out the plant, bag it again, and dispose of it as described above.
- » Inspect the rest of your crop to ensure there are no more plants.
- » Again, talk to your regional council.

\* Be aware that in some areas, including Southland, plants are not growing as high as a metre.



Velvetleaf mature plant



Velvetleaf multiple seedpods



Velvetleaf mature plant



Photo courtesy of Landcare Research

The velvetleaf seedpod



Velvetleaf flower

## VELVETLEAF MANAGEMENT – GOING FORWARD

Velvetleaf is mainly spread by stock and agricultural machinery. Good on-farm biosecurity management will help control this pest into the future. A velvetleaf farm management plan has been developed (available here: [www.mpi.govt.nz/alerts](http://www.mpi.govt.nz/alerts)), that contains guidelines for:

- » machinery hygiene;
- » feed management;
- » stock movement;
- » future management of affected areas; and
- » re-inspection in future growing seasons.

Below are some key recommendations for preventing velvetleaf spreading.

### Machinery hygiene

- » Clean machinery before it leaves an affected property – by removing all visible soil and plant matter.

### Feed Management

- » Fence off areas where velvetleaf has been found within a paddock, to keep stock out. Allow a 1.5m buffer from weed to fence. If using a single wire fence, add an extra 1m, i.e. 2.5m buffer. Leave the fodder beet in the ground.
- » Finish grazing in an uncontaminated part of the crop, and if possible keep the stock there for at least 24 hours.
- » If you're buying fodder beet, ask the seller if their property had velvetleaf; purchase cleaned fodder beet where possible.
- » To avoid further spread of velvetleaf seeds, growers must not lift beet from areas where velvetleaf seeds have dropped.

### Stock movement

- » Before moving stock off an infested paddock, or to another farm, keep stock in a designated holding paddock for 24 hours. Record stock movements for up to a week after grazing for future monitoring.
- » If using a stock truck, inform the truck operator of the potential for velvetleaf seed contamination in the effluent. Stock truck effluent must be disposed of in an effluent disposal site.
- » If newly arrived stock could have fed on velvetleaf, try to keep them in a holding paddock for 24 hours.

### Re-inspection in future seasons

You should start checking your paddocks for velvetleaf from early December and over summer. If you find any plants, follow the guidelines overleaf.

If you have any questions or concerns around velvetleaf and how to manage it, refer to the MPI website [www.mpi.govt.nz/alerts](http://www.mpi.govt.nz/alerts). See the farm management plan here on our website or call **0800 80 99 66**.

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