

Californian thistle

(Cirsium arvense)

Is Californian thistle on your property?

If you need help with identifying thistles please contact us on freephone 0508 800 800.



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Identification

Strongly growing perennial that sends up many aerial shoots reaching 1 m tall. The young plants have short upright shoots in a rosette. Wingless stems have lance-shaped leaves with strong spines on margins. Creeping rhizomes are horizontal. Characteristic thistle-like white/pale purple/mauve flower heads produce masses of seeds with pappus of fluffy white hairs, in summer.

Weedy characteristics

Grows thickly and limits access to pasture by young stock. Very persistent root system that requires repeat application of herbicide or physical control to remove from pasture.

Methods of dispersal

Seedling establishment of new infestations is minimal due to the vast majority of seeds falling close to the mother plant that is allelopathic (poison) to its own seed. Seed is long lived and soil disturbance of cleared ground will allow new infestations to start. Roots carried by soil movement, machinery and livestock also disperse the plant.

Impact on indigenous plants

Low impact on indigenous plants as intolerant of shade. But perennial roots compete in pasture.

Typical habitats

Most open areas, short tussockland, sand dunes, forest clearings, overgrazed pasture with bare areas.

Control

1. Weed wiper with Versatil at 40 parts of water to 1 part Versatil at or before the flowerheads form.

Site management

Ensure biological control agents are present. Good grazing management will avoid bare patches on pasture and limit reseeding. Thistles colonize urine and dung patches and prevent grass regrowth.

Species recovery

Will seed any bare patches rapidly. Mowing will allow plants to resprout, especially during the growing season.

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