

Tips for using Taskforce from Ben Minehan – Senior Biosecurity Officer (Plants) for the Marlborough District Council

Taskforce Herbicide and its active ingredient, sodium flupropanate, was registered for the first time in New Zealand in October 2011. Australian farmers have been using flupropanate herbicide since its registration in 1972 and have 40 years of experience with the product. We have now had 18 months to apply the product using ground equipment and 8 months to apply it using the helicopter and test it under NZ field conditions. Taskforce Herbicide is very slow acting and it can take up to 12 months to give complete control of the target weed. This means a long wait before assessments can be carried out following applications. It was always going to take several years to learn how to get the best from the product.

Observations

- Taskforce herbicide is very slow acting. The tips of the target weed will yellow off first which may take 2-4 months depending on the time of year it was applied. The target weed will brown off faster when actively growing in spring and autumn. The weed will then brown off from the tips to the base over the next 6-9 months. You can tell they are dead as they can easily be pulled out of the ground by hand.
- The end of July is the absolute cut-off for applying Taskforce Herbicide on its own to stop plants from seeding. If you apply it after this date, the target weed will produce viable seed. We proved this by harvesting Nassella Tussock seed from plants sprayed in mid and late August with Taskforce Herbicide and AgResearch tested it for viability.
- It is early days yet, but we think the optimum time to boom spray Taskforce Herbicide is from January to April if there is rain in the forecast. If it is a dry Summer and Autumn like this year, May to July is the next best option. This allows the Taskforce to be washed in and absorbed by the target weeds and come spring, the desirable pasture species re-generate to colonise the pasture as the target weeds die.

Four key components to successfully controlling Nassella tussock, Chilean Needlegrass and Kangaroo Grass using Taskforce herbicide on its own

- Before the application of Taskforce, graze the block as hard as possible to reduce any potential for foliar absorption of Taskforce by the desirable pasture species.
- Always thoroughly decontaminate your spraying equipment before applying Taskforce herbicide – This removes any residue which may damage or kill any desirable pasture species
- Taskforce herbicide is washed into the soil by rain or heavy dews and is then absorbed by the roots of the target weeds. The best time to apply Taskforce is actually immediately before or during a light rain. This reduces any foliar absorption of the spray mix by the desirable pasture species you are trying to promote.
- Apply Taskforce using well calibrated equipment using the lowest water rate you can apply confidently. The new label water rate is 70-200L ha. Bill Dobbie (Australian farmer and manufacturer of Taskforce) recommends 80L of water per hectare. Uniform

coverage of the treated area is your goal and then let the rain wash the Taskforce into the ground. Use nozzles that deliver a spray quality of coarse droplets. Avoid fine or very fine droplets. You do not need to saturate the pasture!!

In Marlborough this season, we are encouraging landowners that are spot spraying their weeds to include glyphosate in their spray mix. (Do not add a surfactant!) This browns out the target weeds a lot quicker and allows Council officers to carry out compliance inspections as soon as landowners have finished their control work. Remember any boom spraying needs to be completed by the end of July at the latest. If finances allow, I would recommend an application of fertiliser and certified seed during the Autumn after boom spraying areas with Taskforce Herbicide to encourage the growth of desirable pasture species.

Please ring Ben Minehan at the Marlborough District Council on 03 5207400 if you need any advice on how to get the best from Taskforce Herbicide. I wish you all the best with your control operations.



Nassella Tussock 7.5 months after treatment at 2L/Ha on steep hill country



A paddock that contained scattered CNG 8 months after treatment at 3L/Ha on lowland country