

Aerial Spraying Fact Sheet



greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Pane Matua Taiao

Why do we do aerial spraying in our regional parks?

Our regional parks include a wide range of different landscapes including forests, farmland, lakes and coastal area. We put a lot of thought and resources into looking after them and protecting them from threats, including from invasive weeds.

While it may seem counterintuitive for us to use chemicals as part of this, herbicide spraying is sometimes the most effective and efficient method to manage the weed species which threaten our park environments, and the habitat for native birds, fish and insects.

Some areas of our Wellington regional parks are also used for pastoral farming. Weeds such as gorse and lupin need to be controlled in these areas, as they invade pasture, create significant stock management issues and damage assets such as fences.

Aerial spraying is one of the various methods used to control problem weeds in our regional parks. Sometimes this is the only safe and practical control method for weed infestations because of the inaccessible locations or scale of the problem. In other cases it can be especially useful as a one-off “knock-down” for large infestations. Localised regrowth can then be controlled by stock grazing and spot control on the ground.

In many cases the chemicals we use are no different than people buy at the garden centre and use with their hand sprayers, just on a much larger scale.



When do we use aerial spraying in place of another method?

Aerial spraying is used to tackle problem weeds which we are unable to control using ground based methods. This may include large scale infestations of pest weeds such as gorse and lupin. These weeds can grow up to four metres high and cover hectares of land. Their seed spreads easily and they are very fire-prone.

Sometimes the terrain is steep, uneven or otherwise dangerous to ground based operators. If this type of risk is present to our staff or contractors, aerial spraying will be considered.

How do we minimise spray drift during aerial spraying?

This is an absolutely critical aspect of aerial spraying and the part of the work which causes the most concern.

It is illegal for spray to drift outside a designated Operational Area and various measures all work together to ensure that this does not happen.

The technology we use for aerial spraying is a key aspect. The nozzles attached to the helicopters deliver large droplets of herbicide rather than a fine mist which means the spray falls at a controlled rate and is less likely to be carried by the wind outside of the planned spray zone.

During spraying programmes we carefully plan around weather conditions, with everyone involved constantly monitoring wind speeds and direction throughout the operation itself. If wind conditions change and are likely to affect the delivery of the chemicals the spraying will immediately stop.



Is aerial spraying harmful to me as a park user?

Just like weed spraying in your garden at home there are risks involved with the use of chemicals.

Through careful planning and thorough understanding of the chemicals we use for our spraying operations we minimise risks to our park users and the selected plants and animals.

We have strict health and safety plans in place to ensure our staff and people are safe when actively using the chemicals. Through communicating with our licence holders and neighbours, placing notices around spray sites and restricting public access during the actual spraying, we ensure that you are kept safe.

All of the herbicides we used are strictly regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency. We adhere to all applicable rules and guidelines, which include the requirement for appropriately qualified people to be present, a plan to be developed and spray application records to be kept.

How do we communicate our aerial spraying plans?

When planning spraying activities we communicate to all landowners whose properties are within 300 metres of our spraying areas. This may involve a letter drop and/or a public notice in the newspaper. If we are planning to spray in a place where there is public access such as our regional parks we also place signs at all entrance points. We may also publish individual Fact Sheets to give specific details on the operation

Problem weeds in our parks:

Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) are shrubs which can quickly take over our parks and replace our native species.

Broom



Gorse



Lupin



Where can you find out more information?

For more information about how we manage pest plants please visit <http://www.gwrc.govt.nz/pest-plants/> or phone 0800 496 734.

