

# Invasive plants and noxious weeds in Pitcombe

Following some local concerns about the growth of ragwort and other invasive non-native plants, the PPC is offering the following guidance. Invasive plants are species which have been brought into the UK that have the ability to spread causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live. Noxious weeds are native species, which have been deemed to cause a problem to farming productivity.

Under the Weeds Act 1959 the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs can, if satisfied that injurious weeds are growing upon any land, serve a notice requiring the occupier to take action to prevent the spread of those weeds. An unreasonable failure to comply with a notice is an offence.

The Weeds Act applies to:

Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) • Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) • Creeping or Field Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) • Curled Dock (*Rumex crispus*) • Broad-Leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*)

Responsibility for control rests with the occupier of the land on which ragwort is growing. This responsibility applies to ragwort and the other weeds specified under the Weeds Act. When seeking to prevent the spread of ragwort it is expected that all landowners, occupiers and managers will co-operate and, where necessary, take a collective responsibility for ensuring that effective control of the spread of ragwort is achieved.

The most effective way to prevent the spread of ragwort is to preclude its establishment through strategic management rather than last minute control. In managed grasslands, good agricultural management will minimise the chance of Common Ragwort establishing itself. In amenity areas, highway verges, railway land and woodland, any activities which cause disturbance to the soil and the loss of ground cover may increase the risk of ragwort becoming established. Occupiers of all land, including uncultivated land, derelict and waste areas, should be vigilant for the presence of ragwort. Action to prevent its spread should be taken where ragwort poses a high risk to land used for grazing, or forage production.

Detection at an early stage will enable any potential problems to be more easily, safely and economically dealt with. The implementation of a control strategy will ensure that persistent problems are dealt with in a timely manner.