

# Weed Notes



## Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*)

### What is Spanish heath?

- Spanish heath is an environmental and pasture weed.
- Spanish heath is a **declared weed** under the Tasmanian *Weed Management Act 1999*. The importation, sale and distribution of Spanish heath are prohibited in Tasmania.

### How to identify Spanish heath

- Spanish heath is a woody evergreen perennial (long-lived) shrub growing to a height of 1.5 to 2 metres and occasionally reaching 3.5 metres.
- Spanish heath stems are woody and brittle, and the leaves are tiny (3 to 7 mm long), pointed, and clustered densely on the stem. The leaves have a longitudinal groove on the lower surface.
- Spanish heath flowers appear from late autumn to early spring. The white or pinkish flowers are 4 to 5 mm long and occur in loose groups towards the end of the stems. Each flower can produce hundreds of tiny, dust-like seeds which are released when flowering finishes and the flowers have browned off.
- The roots are fibrous, and the plant readily breaks off near the base, often regrowing quickly from the broken stump.
- If you are still in doubt about the weed you are dealing with, contact your Regional Weed Management Officer on 1300 368 550 for help.



Spanish heath plant



Spanish heath flower close-up



Spanish heath invading bush

### Spanish heath in Tasmania

- Spanish heath occurs in many areas of Tasmania, with significant infestations in the north (Tamar and Meander Valleys), north-west (from Devonport to Smithton), south (Collinsvale, the Channel area and the Huon Valley), and on the east coast (St Helens, Bicheno, and St Marys).
- Spanish heath occurs on degraded pastures, neglected areas and roadsides. Spanish heath also invades native vegetation types including wet forest, dry forest, grassland and riparian (stream-side) areas, generally (but not always) where there has been some soil disturbance.

- Infestations of Spanish heath in pastures can reduce productivity. In native bushland communities, dense infestations of Spanish heath can replace native species. Spanish heath also increases the fire hazard as it is extremely combustible.

### **What is the legal status of Spanish heath in your area?**

- The legal responsibilities of landholders and other stakeholders in dealing with Spanish heath are laid out in the Spanish heath Statutory Weed Management Plan at [www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au).
- Use Table 1 (Zone A municipalities) and Table 2 (Zone B municipalities) in the Statutory Weed Management Plan to find out whether your area falls in an eradication or containment zone.

## **Control of Spanish heath**

### ***Do's and don'ts of Spanish heath control***

#### ***Do's***

- Plan your control program, this will save time and money in the long-run;
- Use a combination of different control methods;
- Consider the impact of your control methods on off-target things, especially if herbicides are used;
- Ensure machinery and equipment is washed down between sites or prior to contractors leaving site;
- Revisit the site and use follow-up treatments over at least 5 years;
- Coordinate your control program with neighbouring landholders where your Spanish heath problem crosses property boundaries;
- For large infestations, tackle the smaller, outlying patches first. The larger infestation can be tackled later;
- Dispose of removed material carefully to avoid regeneration: burn if possible, otherwise pile where the plants won't stem layer.

#### ***Don'ts***

- Don't introduce Spanish heath to Spanish heath-free areas (e.g. by failing to wash down machinery and equipment between sites);
- Don't start your control program without first planning your approach;
- Don't rely on just one control method;
- Don't rely on one attempt at removal – follow-up is essential;
- Don't slash flowering plants – this will spread the seed;
- Don't rely on slashing to eradicate Spanish heath – slashing can worsen an infestation;
- Don't rely on burning to eradicate Spanish heath – burning will worsen an infestation;
- Don't rely on one attempt at control: follow-up is essential to eradicate Spanish heath.

## Spread of Spanish heath

- Spanish heath reproduces by seed and stem layering. Seed is dispersed by wind and water, by slashing, and in soil and mud.
  - Layering occurs where stems contact moist soil and send down roots. Spanish heath is also capable of shooting from broken stems and roots.
  - See the Washdown Guidelines for Weed and Disease Control at [www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au) for detailed information on how to wash-down equipment and personnel to reduce the chance of spreading Spanish heath.
- 

## Avoid the introduction of Spanish heath

- Preventing the introduction of Spanish heath to Spanish heath-free areas is the best means of control. Good machinery and equipment hygiene-practices are vital.
  - Spanish heath seed is usually carried into new areas in soil and mud attached to machinery or boots. Spanish heath seed is too heavy to be dispersed by wind, and birds are not important in spreading seed.
  - Spanish heath seed can also be carried in water. Removing Spanish heath bushes on the edges of water courses is important in preventing dispersal of seed downstream.
- 

## Physical removal

- Seedlings or small plants can be hand-pulled or dug out, taking care to remove as much of the root system as possible.
  - The material should be disposed of safely, either by burning where appropriate, or piling plants where they cannot layer.
  - If plants are in flower, care should be taken to prevent accidental seed dispersal during disposal.
  - Large plants can have very extensive root systems, and digging out or mechanical removal may result in soil erosion. Alternative control options should be considered.
  - Slashing can reduce the amount of seed produced if undertaken prior to flowering, but will not kill plants. Slashing can result in more root development and low growth, making later control more difficult.
  - Slashing during or soon after flowering will spread seeds and should not be undertaken.
- 

## Weed matting

- Weed matting can kill Spanish heath and can achieve a 100% kill after 45 weeks.
- 

## Cultivation

- Cultivation can be used to control Spanish heath in infested pasture.
- Cultivation must be undertaken regularly until the plants are no longer re-sprouting from root fragments. The establishment of competitive pasture species will help reduce Spanish heath regeneration.
- Single or infrequent cultivation will make the problem worse, and require follow up control of regrowth and seedlings.

---

## Revegetation

- Frequent burning of Spanish heath without follow-up will lead to increased germination of seed and more Spanish heath. Burning should ONLY be used in conjunction with other control methods.
- Burning is useful for removing large stands of Spanish heath and making follow-up spraying more effective. Fire destroys large amounts of seed and stimulates much of the remaining seed to germinate, so that the seedlings can be sprayed the following year, greatly reducing the seed in the soil.
- Burning can be useful several months after spraying of an infestation as it reduces the dead stems to ashes.
- Burning can be useful when combined with grazing by sheep or goats. Burning will reduce the amount of mature (and unpalatable) foliage and stems of older bushes, as well as stimulating the growth of seedling-shoots which are more palatable to grazing animals.
- Spanish heath burns readily and Spanish heath fires may cause severe damage to adjacent bush. Extreme care should be taken when burning Spanish heath near native vegetation, fences or buildings. Spanish heath growing underneath high voltage power lines should not be burned without consulting the power company.

---

## Soil Improvement

- Spanish heath prefers acid soils. Applying lime to infested pasture can reduce regeneration of Spanish heath, but will not eradicate the weed by itself.
- Lime can harm native plants and is not suitable for the control of Spanish heath in native vegetation including native grasslands.

---

## Burning

- Spanish heath is well adapted to fire and is not killed by burning. Burning is likely to make an infestation worse.

---

## Grazing

- Grazing by sheep can provide some control in moderately infested pastures. Sheep prefer the softer growing tips which reduces of flower production.
- However grazing alone will not eradicate an infestation.

---

## Chemical control

- A number of herbicides are registered for use on Spanish heath in Tasmania. See Herbicides for Spanish heath Control for more information.

---

## For more information

- Visit the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment website at [www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au)
- Contact your Regional Weed Management Officer on 1300 368 550.

### **Disclaimer**

These herbicide recommendations are made subject to the product being registered for that purpose under relevant legislation. It is the user's responsibility to check that registration or an off-label permit covers the proposed use. Always read the herbicide label.

If in doubt, check with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) website at [www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au).

Only herbicides registered for use in pasture and non-cropping situations – or included under off-label provisions - are listed in the following table. For recommendations in specific crops consult an agronomist.

Care must be taken in using herbicides as non-target plants contacted may be harmed.

### **Wetting agents**

Most herbicides require a wetting agent for best results. Carefully consult the product label for specific directions regarding any adjuvants.

### **Waterways and wetlands**

Be careful! Many herbicides can cause damage to waterways and wetlands. Check the herbicide label directions carefully before use near waterways and wetlands. For more information see Rivercare: guideline for safe and effective herbicide use near water at [www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au)

### **Herbicide Brands and Concentrations**

Herbicides are referred to by the active chemical ingredient in the following table. The product trade names in this publication are supplied on the understanding that no preference between equivalent products is intended and that the inclusion of a product does not imply endorsement by DPIPWE over any other equivalent product from another manufacturer. Information on available brands containing the herbicide you require should be obtained from a reputable herbicide supplier or the APVMA website at [www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au).

There may be a number of products with the same active ingredient some with alternate formulations (concentration) registered for control of a weed eg: Glyphosate 360g/L, Glyphosate 450g/L may be registered for use on the same weed. Alternate formulations such as these will have a different application rate. ALWAYS check the label.

## Herbicide for Spanish heath Control

### Foliar spray application

Stage of Growth	Herbicide (active ingredient)	Example of commercial product (concentration of active ingredient)	Application rate of commercial product	Withholding period	Comments
While actively growing	* Glyphosate	Round-Up Biactive®, Weedmaster Duo® (360g/L)	100 - 130 ml/10L	nil	In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949.  Suitable for use near waterways.  Non-selective and will damage or kill trees and grasses that come into contact with spray.
	* Triclopyr + picloram**	Grass-up™ (300 g/L + 100 g/L)	35 – 50 ml/10L	nil	In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949.  Will not affect grasses, will severely damage clovers and other broadleaved plants, including surrounding trees, if contacted by the spray.  Soil-residual, hindering the re-establishment of clovers and other broadleaved plants for 6-12 months.
	* Triclopyr	Triclopyr 600®, Garlon 600® (600 g/L)	17 ml/10 L	nil	In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949.  Will not affect grasses, will severely damage clovers and other broadleaved plants, including surrounding trees, if contacted by the spray.
	* Metsulfuron-methyl	Brush-Off®, Associate® (600 g/Kg)	1 - 1.5 g/10 L	nil	In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949.  Will not affect grasses, will severely damage clovers and other broadleaved plants, including surrounding trees, if contacted by the spray.  Soil-residual, hindering the re-establishment of clovers and other broadleaved plants for 6-12 months.

## Herbicide for Spanish heath Control

	*Metsulfuron-methyl + glyphosate	Trounce®, Cut-Out® (various formulations)	Refer to label	nil	<p>In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949.</p> <p>Non-selective and will damage or kill trees and grasses that come into contact with spray.</p> <p>Soil-residual, hindering the re-establishment of clovers and other broadleaved plants for 6-12 months.</p>
--	----------------------------------	---	----------------	-----	---

### Cut and paint, drill and frill

Stage of Growth	Herbicide (active ingredient)	Example of commercial product (concentration of active ingredient)	Dose	Withholding period	Comments
While actively growing	*Glyphosate	Round-Up Biactive®, Weedmaster Duo® (360 g/L)	Undiluted to 1:5 with water	Nil	<p>In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949.</p> <p>Cut and paint: Make the cuts as close to the ground as possible, particularly if there is a risk of tripping or other damage occurring post-treatment.</p> <p>Apply immediately (within 15 seconds) after cut.</p> <p>Scraping some of the bark on the remaining stump may improve the effectiveness of this technique</p>
			2 ml per hole/cut		<p>In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949.</p> <p>Drill and fill is useful for very large plants with thick stems.</p> <p>Drill holes into crown at 10 cm intervals.</p> <p>Drill holes on an angle so that the herbicide does not drain out.</p> <p>Keep the holes clean of soil, as any mixing with soil will reduce the effectiveness of the herbicide.</p> <p>It is not necessary to plug the hole.</p>

## Herbicide for Spanish heath Control

	*Triclopyr + picloram	Access® (240 g/L + 120 g/L)	1:60 of diesel	Nil	Cut and paint: apply to cut stump.
	*Triclopyr	Triclopyr 600®, Garlon 600® (600g/L)	1:60 of diesel	nil	In accordance with APVMA Permit PER8949. Cut and paint: apply to cut stump. Apply immediately (within 15 seconds) after cut.
	Picloram	Vigilant® Herbicide Gel (43 g/kg)	3-5 mm thick layer 5 mm thick layer	Nil	Stems up to 20 mm diameter. Stems greater than 20 mm diameter. In the case of multi-stem plants treat at least 80% of stems including main stems.

\* These products are not registered for this use in Tasmania and will not be mentioned on product labels, however Permit Number – PER8949 issued by the Australian Pesticides & Veterinary Medicines Authority allows this specific use. If using this method and herbicide you will require a copy of this off-label permit.

For further information on permit details visit the APVMA website at [www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au).

### Important Disclaimer

To the extent permitted by law, the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (including its employees and consultants) excludes all liability to any person for any consequences, including but not limited to all losses, damages, costs, expenses and any other compensation, arising directly or indirectly from using information or material (in part or in whole) contained in this publication.