

Winning the war on weeds

As a territory manager with PGG Wrightson Turf, I'm part of a team that is dedicated to the New Zealand turf industry.

As a company, our focus is on the delivery of knowledge and services across the whole industry - from golf courses and major stadiums to local councils and schools.

Over the next few issues of the *School News*, my aim is to provide you with information and recommendations to help your school fields become increasingly sustainable across changing seasons. This can be achieved by implementing management techniques such as seasonal aeration/renovations, earth worm control, management of wear and tear, nutrient management and basic broadleaf weed control. And when it comes to the issue

of broadleaf, now is the ideal time to start looking at control through the application of a broadleaf herbicide (which is a herbicide that only targets broadleaf weeds without interference to established grasses).

Weeds can tell us a lot about what is going on beneath our turf. The presence of clovers and plantains can indicate compaction, whilst dandelion and wireweed can be an indication of low pH. This is not recommended if you are managing a ryegrass sward, where your soil pH ideally needs to be approximately 6.0.

It is currently the season when the biggest weed issue of the playground starts to show its ugly face - Onehunga weed (Prickle weed). There wouldn't be one child that this weed hasn't affected during the summer, where it will make children think twice



Onehunga

about enjoying their lunchtime play on school fields. Onehunga weed is an annual weed which looks like a small ferny, rosette about 20 cm in diameter, with flowers that are a tiny, greenish-yellow. Seeds germinate in autumn but the Onehunga weed doesn't put on much growth until spring. By the

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middle of this season each rosette of leaves contains a flower head with many spines and the seeds mature and drop from the plant by about the middle of summer. The best time for control is when the plants are putting on their flush of growth during spring (Oct-Nov).

Unfortunately, there isn't a 'one herbicide fixes all' approach to control broadleaf weeds in turf, but my recommendation would be 'Bow & Arrow Herbicide' (20g/L clopyralid, 15g/L diflufenican, 300g/L MCPA) at label rates of five litres per hectare. Bow & Arrow Herbicide has a large spectrum of weed control and can be tank mixed with another herbicide - 'Smackdown' (Carfentrazone) - to broaden the weed spectrum even further. Like all chemical applications, I always recommend talking to your nearest PGG Wrightson territory

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Plantain



Wireweed

manager on site for additional application details and rates. I would also recommend that you engage with an approved and accredited applicator to spray such chemicals.

It's also the time of year when the changing of sporting codes happens, with rugby and soccer taking a break and cricket and athletics commencing. For those schools with artificial cricket wickets, maintenance requirements are minimal. A spray for any moss or algae that may have established over the winter, with products such Mostox® or 30 Seconds 'Spray and Walk Away', will have the wicket ready to go in no time and both

products are easiest to apply via a spray knapsack.

With those schools that have the pleasure of being able to produce a natural clay-based cricket block, now is when the hard work of renovation begins with wetting and re-wetting, rolling and cross rolling of your block will set you up for the rest of the season. It's important to keep up the feeding of your block with

a 1/1 ratio slow release fertiliser such as Andersons 15-0-15 50% slow release. This keeps growth slowly ticking along, as well as delivering added potassium to help harden the grass surface in preparation for rolling. Keep an eye out for disease on block as this can very easily take hold and can sometimes be hard to recover from. Prevention is better than cure in this instance,

so applying fungicides such as 'Dithane' (Mancozeb), 'Cavalry' (Chlorothalonil) and 'Instrata' (Chlorothalonil, Propiconazole, Fludioxinil) at regular intervals (e.g. every third week) will help protect against these diseases.

I hope the summer treats you all well with a good break over the holiday period in preparation for 2016. [S11](#)



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