



COMMON STORKSBILL
(*Erodium cicutarium*)



MUSKY STORKSBILL
(*Erodium moschatum*)

The storksbills

Why are they weedy?

Compete with desirable pasture species

Where are they found?

Common in gardens and pastures throughout New Zealand

Are they toxic?

No, but their sharp, twisting seeds can damage the skin, mouth, and eyes of livestock, especially sheep

Can you eat it?

Young leaves can be added to salads or cooked as for spinach, roots can be chewed

THERE ARE two very similar-looking storksbills you're likely to see on your block, common and musky. They both start as a low-growing rosette-type plant, germinating in autumn and setting small pink-purple flowers from September to May.

They stand out once they go to seed, reaching 30cm (common) to 50cm (musky) high with long, pointed, beak-like seed heads. Seeds can fly 1m+ from the parent plant, then corkscrew into the soil. They can also twist their way into the skin, eyes, and mouths of livestock, even through wool.



The plants are named for their unusual seedheads that look like a long beak.

How to control storksbill

Maintain thick, healthy pasture as storksbills tend to germinate on bare soil left behind after pasture is overgrazed or killed by drought.

The sooner you notice plants – ideally as seedlings – the better your chances of controlling it.

You can hand-pull plants, but once they develop a thick taproot, tiny root hairs remain in the soil, which can resprout.

If you want to spray, there are limited control options as storksbills are herbicide-tolerant. Your best option is to identify them as seedlings and use bentazone-based products (ie, Basagran, Dynamo®, Pulsar®).

Once plants are larger, you can suppress (but not kill) them with a 2,4-D-based herbicide (Baton).

Remember to always read the label and seek professional advice before using pesticides.

About Gary

Gary Bosley works as PGG Wrightson's North Island technical specialist in agronomy. He and his family live on a 4ha lifestyle block south-east of Auckland. PGG Wrightson Ltd (PGW) does not warrant the information's accuracy, quality, outcome or fitness for any purpose.



NOTE: We recommend you get your own independent advice before you take any action on your block. Any action you take is strictly at your own risk.