

PASTURE WEED WATCH

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DAISY

YOU KNOW how builders always live in a half-finished house? And plumbers always have low water pressure? And half the lights in an electrician's house don't work? Well, I'm a plant and soil scientist and I have the worst lawn in New Zealand.

I have already discussed nearly all the weeds in my lawn but I've been saving one for now.

The common daisy (*Bellis perennis*) is a ubiquitous weed found in lawns and pastures all over New Zealand. It's originally native to Europe but has managed to effectively spread to most temperate regions. It is a member of the Asteraceae family and I know it must seem like every second weed I write about is in this family but to be fair it is one of the largest families. Its cousins include lettuce, thistles, sunflowers and lots of other types of daisy.

Everyone can identify the common daisy, but for completion's sake I will give you a run down on identification. Each daisy grows as a small rosette of flat spoon-shaped leaves. Often, daisies will form a cluster of rosettes all linked by short rhizomes (underground stems). Daisies usually start flowering in early summer and can continue right through into early winter.

HOW TO CONTROL IT

You might not want to control daisy in your lawn, but out in your pasture it can mount a serious takeover. It's tricky to fight too, as it hugs the ground, easily dodging mower blades. Stock avoid eating it, and it tends to colonise bare areas pretty quickly.

It does enjoy wet areas so draining an area can be a step towards a fix. It also doesn't handle competition very well so keeping a thick, healthy, full pasture is a great tactic.

WHY IS IT A WEED?

It is a competitor of lawns, turfs and pastures

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

All across New Zealand

IS IT TOXIC?

No

ALTERNATIVE USES?

It is edible and can be used to make daisy chains

If you do decide to spray it out of pasture, a mix of 2,4D and Preside can give good suppression but the best option is to create good conditions for pasture, which will crowd it out and stop it from re-infesting an area.

3 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT DAISIES

1 The Latin name translates to 'pretty everlasting' which my wife was quick to point out is quite apt, adding another weed to her it's-not-a-weed-because-it's-pretty list.

2 The word daisy is a corruption of 'day's eye' which relates to the flower head opening during the day and closing at night.

3 It's a great edible: the leaves can be eaten raw or cooked – avoid older leaves as there is a decided flavour of earwax – and flowers can be eaten raw or used in tea.



MILTON MUNRO is a soil and plant scientist for rural supply company PGG Wrightson. He looks at common pasture weeds on blocks and how to deal with them.

