



Cerastium fontanum



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Mouse-ear chickweed

What is it?

A short-lived (12 months) perennial

Why is it a weed in pasture?

- spreading invasive plant that competes with pasture and crops;
- can germinate all year round, but most commonly in spring and autumn;
- seeds can be dormant in soil for up to 40 years.

Where is it found?

All over NZ

Is it toxic?

No

Identifying features

Dark green, hairy, mouse ear-shaped leaves; small white flowers with 5 petals from October-March.

Other uses

Young growing tips are edible, raw or cooked, but most people prefer hair-free common chickweed.

MOUSE-EAR CHICKWEED

(*Cerastium fontanum*) grows flat to the ground, smothering pasture plants, and infesting crops.

If left unchecked, it forms a dark green mat of stems and leaves. After flowering, it produces small, curved seed capsules containing tiny brown seeds that can germinate all year round.

The mouse-ear weeds

There are two other 'mouse-ear' weeds, and it's easy to mistake them for perennial mouse-ear chickweed.

Annual mouse-ear chickweed (*Cerastium glomeratum*) looks quite similar but is lighter green and dies off in winter.

Common field chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*) also spreads like a mat, but it has smooth, hair-free leaves.

How to control it

If you create the ideal soil conditions for pasture plants and use good grazing management practices, you won't have an issue with mouse-ear chickweed.

British research shows grazing sheep, and regularly harrowing pasture also help control its spread.



Cerastium arvense

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.