



Stinking mayweed

Why is it a weed?

Invasive plant that colonises pastures and outcompetes desirable grazing species

Where is it found?

Nationwide

Is it toxic?

No

Other uses

Extracts have been used for bacteria control



Have you got a stinker?

It's easy to confuse stinking mayweed with other varieties, such as the scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) and rayless mayweed (*Matricaria discoidea*).

If you crush the foliage of one of these very similar-looking weeds, your nose will tell you which one you've got:

- if it stinks, it's stinking mayweed;
- if it smells like pineapple, it's rayless mayweed – it's easy to control if you encourage healthy pasture plants to shade it out;
- if it doesn't smell of anything, it's probably scentless chamomile, best hand-pulled, or controlled with Versatill spray when it's a seedling.

IT HAS a pretty flower, and it stinks.

Stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*) is a member of the same family as the similar-looking chamomile, and I get a lot of calls about it as it blooms over summer.

It tends to be a fairly low-key, low-growing plant, infesting bare soil and growing untouched as it's not very



palatable. Cattle don't like it, and sheep only graze it if there's nothing else to eat.

Then, suddenly it seems, it's in full flower and too big to control.

While it's generally only a nuisance in summer, its seeds can germinate at any time of year if the soil is moist enough.

Plants usually die off after going to seed, but if they're prevented from seeding – for example, if they're mowed off while flowering – they may survive over winter.

How to control it

Stinking mayweed seedlings are weak, slow-growing, and can't compete against healthy pasture plants. Easy ways to avoid an infestation are:

- don't over-graze pasture;
- don't allow soil to become pugged;
- maintain healthy soil and pasture.

If you spot the odd plant, pull it out by hand and sow grass seeds in its place.

If you have a large area of plants that haven't gone to seed, regular mowing will stop it from seeding. You can then spray it out when it begins growing again in spring.

If you want to use a chemical, it's best to target seedlings, so you'll need to check pasture carefully to find them. Clover-safe options are:

- flumetsulam, ie Headstart, Valdo;
- bentazone, ie Dynamo, Pulsar.

If plants are larger, use a spray containing clopyralid such as Versatill PowerFlo™ or Archer 750. However, while Versatill PowerFlo™ or Archer 750 are grass-safe, they will kill clover.

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.

