

## MECHANICAL CONTROL OF MANUKA

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OVER the last 3 or 4 years a large portion of our time has been spent on the clearing of manuka. In almost every case it has been on land of an arable type, and with the sole idea of production. Therefore it would seem that there is no other than mechanical control of this land.

In the first place we used an ordinary dozer blade on any very heavy scrub, followed by a plough. On one farm the owner thought that this cost too much and at his request we cleared another ridge by ploughing without any help from a blade at all. This proved to cost more than the use of the two combined.

For the same man we then cleared another ridge with the blade alone. This proved to be the most reasonable so far as cost went, but small scrub was very hard to remove as it did not have enough resistance to the blade. All this had been purchased for less than £1 per acre, almost no stock could be carried, and the area was used as a holding block. The owner has now increased his flock by three sheep to the acre cleared, and is convinced that it is an economic proposition.

A further reduction in cost came with the purchase of a rootrake. This has prongs about 2ft. 6in. long and about 10in. apart.

Small scrub which was hard to clear with the blade because of a very thick strike of seedlings, almost always found after a fire had been through the older scrub, came out easily with the use of the rootrake. On older scrub almost every root was taken from the ground with a very small loss of soil.

Very dense scrub with no breaks whatsoever, and covering a large area, is quite impossible to bulldoze or rootrake. The answer is to smash it down or flatten it out with a bulldozer blade or heavy roller. In most places it is impossible to use a roller, as a machine cannot get a grip because of the steepness of the country. The best is a bulldozer blade, because it can be lifted if the machine gets into difficulty in awkward places. After the dense growth has been crushed or flattened it should be left for 6 months or more and then burnt off, letting the moisture get right into the ground; and a plough would have no trouble in turning what is left under.

Patchy scrub, gorse, or broom situated on ridgy country can be cleared with a bulldozer or rootrake for about £3 to £5 per acre, the reason being that there is no great distance to push the rubbish into the gullies. The dense growth would take from £6 to £12 per acre, depending on the type of growth and the number of trips over it with a bulldozer blade or roller.

The most economic proposition for any person wanting work of this nature done is to decide which category the growth comes under, and work along the lines already mentioned.