

## CONTROL OF CHICKWEED IN PASTURE

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### Summary

Against chickweed (*Stellaria media*) established in dairy pasture, terbutryn was considerably more active than prometryn, but 0.5 kg/ha was insufficient to provide acceptable control. MCPA is commonly used for the control of susceptible broadleaf weeds, and the addition of 0.25 to 0.5 kg/ha terbutryn gave control comparable to benazolin 0.3 kg/ha alone. There was no effect on pastures, apart from a temporary chlorosis and check to white clover (*Trifolium repens*).

### INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH chickweed (*Stellaria media*) is often found in pasture as a result of grass reduction through insect damage, large patches are also very prevalent in undamaged high producing pasture swards especially in the cooler, shadier parts. It was in this latter situation that observational trials were carried out in separate locations in the Waikato district during the winters of 1971 and 1972. As this annual weed is not susceptible to the hormone weedkillers commonly used for general pasture weed control, low rates of certain triazines which were known to be effective when applied in cropping situations, were tested against established plants in dairy pasture.

### EXPERIMENTAL

Treatments, replicated twice, applied in 300 litres/ha by means of a Drake and Fletcher boom sprayer, were made in July to actively growing weed growth 2 to 10 cm high prior to flowering. The weather was fine, and light frosts preceded or followed application. Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) 5 to 10 cm high and white clover (*Trifolium repens*) 2 to 5 cm high were present at all sites, together with some cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) 15 to 20 cm and prairie grass (*Bromus unioloides*) 10 to 25 cm high. All assessments were visual using the 1 to 9 EWRC scale of weed control ratings.

TABLE 1: CONTROL OF CHICKWEED  
(EWRC 1 to 9 ratings at 8 to 12 wks)

Treatment (kg/ha)	Trial No.	1	2	3
terbutryn 0.25 .....			5.5	8.0
terbutryn 0.5 .....	4.5		4.5	5.5
terbutryn 0.25+MCPA 0.5 .....			2.5	1.0
terbutryn 0.5+MCPA 0.5 .....			1.5	1.0
prometryn 0.25 .....			8.0	9.0
prometryn 0.5 .....	7.0		7.0	8.0
prometryn 0.25+MCPA 0.5 .....			6.0	3.5
prometryn 0.5+MCPA 0.5 .....	2.0		4.5	2.5
benazolin 0.3 .....			1.0	1.0
untreated .....	9.0		9.0	9.0

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Chickweed Control

Table 1 summarises the degree of control obtained, and clearly indicates that the triazines were inadequate at 0.5 kg/ha and that the addition of MCPA was necessary to provide satisfactory control similar to that given by the standard benazolin treatment. Under the cool conditions of the trials, the effects from the triazines were slower to appear than when in mixture with MCPA, and maximum effects were achieved 4 to 6 weeks after treatment. The usual presence of other broadleaf weeds such as Scotch thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), necessitates the use of MCPA and when this was applied in mixture with terbutryn, which is more active than prometryn, maximum control of chickweed was achieved with no diminished effect on other broadleaf weeds.

### Pasture Tolerance

At the rates applied, the triazines alone and in mixture with MCPA gave no noticeable effect on any of the grasses present. However, on white clover, there was slight chlorosis and growth check from 0.5 kg/ha terbutryn, but little from prometryn. These initial effects which were only slightly increased by the inclusion of MCPA, disappeared within 4 to 6 weeks of treatment.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the necessity to spray many pastures with MCPA for the control of specific or a range of broadleaf weeds, the inclusion of terbutryn to the spray mix offers a satisfactory means of chickweed control.