

## CAPE WEED FACT SHEET

**Cape weed, cape dandelion**  
*Arctotheca calendula*

### Timing

Jan	❖ Dormant
Feb	
Mar	❖ Germination begins in autumn
Apr	❖ Nearly all the seed germinates within a few weeks of the autumn rains
May	
Jun	❖ Rosette stage during winter
Jul	❖ Grows rapidly in warm temperatures often smothering companion plants in early winter
Aug	
Sep	❖ Flowering and seeding in late winter-spring
Oct	❖ Full flowering late spring, early summer
Nov	
Dec	❖ Dies off with onset of summer.

### Key Points

- Spray early and let pasture take over
- Best herbicide treatment time April - July, when rosettes form, and before it flowers in spring.
- The larger the plant grows, the more difficult to treat.
- Best management approach is a multi-year herbicide regime combined with planting a pasture to out-compete the weed.
- Maintain a health, unbroken pasture - this is the best way to avoid capeweed infestations.
- Each plant can produce 4300 seeds which can remain viable in the soil for several years and can be spread in many ways.

### Spread

- Spread through soil movement, vehicles, machinery, carried by birds/animals, wind, water, or spread through fodder/hay.
- Seeds passing through rabbits remain viable.

### Growth

- Capeweed rapidly dominates overgrazed or poorer pastures.
- The higher temperatures and light level on exposed ground favour capeweed over clovers and grasses – so getting a pasture established to shade/ cool the ground is important.
- Capeweed is favoured by 'false breaks'. Low rainfall events can result in capeweed germination before other species because the woolly seed covering attracts moisture and reduces desiccation.
- Capeweed can survive periods of drought better than most common agricultural species, so a dry period following good germinating rains increases the proportion of capeweed.

### Impacts on Animals and Humans

- In humans capeweed can cause contact dermatitis and hay fever.
- High continuous stocking rates with high levels of phosphate application lead to capeweed dominance in annual pastures and increased soil acidification.
- Capeweed can also cause nitrate and nitrite poisoning of livestock, particularly sheep and cattle.
- Horses develop skin allergies to the pollen which they come across through contact when grazing and/or eating the weed.
- Stock deaths may also occur after spraying herbicides that elevate nitrate content in the capeweed.
- Avoid grazing with horses, pigs and young or breeding stock. Animals that have suffered previous nutritional stress appear to be more susceptible to poisoning.





### Treatment - Herbicides

- Best treatment time is April to July, when rosettes form, and before it flowers in spring - the larger the plant grows, the more difficult to treat with herbicides
- Eradicate the plants before they reach flowering stage - by constant removal of its seeds, the weed misses it's only means of reproducing.
- Follow up over multiple seasons will be required.

### Treatment – Reseeding and Ground Cover

- Don't just rely on herbicide control, it's a short term solution - establish vigorous pasture after removal to reduce re-infestation.
- Reseeding with fast growing mixed pasture or crops should be considered to prevent re-establishment.
- The best long term way to manage capeweed is to establish a dense competitive pasture which means keeping clovers in the pasture system.
- Avoid bare soil patches in late summer and autumn as these can be colonized by capeweed – prevent overgrazing, and consider covering with spread out hay bales.
- Follow up over multiple seasons will be required.

### Treatment – Manual for Small Areas

- Pulling or grubbing can remove capeweed where infestations are small. Use a fork as capeweed can be difficult to pull by hand. First loosen the soil around the plant then lift, taking care to remove as much of the root system as possible.



### Treatment – Cultivation or Mowing

- Cultivation can be used to remove established infestations. Cultivate to expose the root systems with minimal breakage and leave the plants to dry out and die.
- Cultivation can be combined with cropping or pasture establishment to control large and well established infestations.
- Mowing is only effective if repeated regularly and close to the ground to prevent flowering.

### Warnings

- Application of some herbicides can increase nitrate levels in some plants. Where capeweed growing on stock camps or other high fertility areas is treated with these herbicides, stock should be removed from the area until the plants are dead.



### Important Note:

*This fact sheet is useful for general information only, and the hints and tips in here may not be fully applicable to your property or situation. This is particularly true on severely degraded pastures, steeply sloping blocks, where you have livestock or other animals, or where you are in close proximity to water courses, dams or bee hives. Please check all local requirements and instructions on containers before using any chemicals.*

### Contact Us

For all your weed control, pasture improvement, and property maintenance needs.

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