



# LOOK OUT FOR THE PEST WEED VELVETLEAF

MPI is working with primary sector organisations and regional councils to locate outbreaks of this pest weed and get rid of it.

**If you see it, photograph it and call MPI immediately on 0800 80 99 66.**



Velvetleaf mature plant



## WHAT IS VELVETLEAF?

Velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*) is one of the world's worst cropping weeds, affecting many arable crops by competing for nutrients, space and water. It is an unwanted organism in New Zealand.

Velvetleaf is an annual broad-leaved herb that grows 1–2.5 metres tall.

It has buttery-yellow flowers about 3cm across. It flowers from spring through autumn.

Leaves are large and heart-shaped and are velvety to the touch.

The plant has distinctive seedpods with 12–15 segments in a cup-like ring. Each seedpod is about 2.5cm in diameter.

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

Velvetleaf has been discovered in fodder beet crops in the North and South Islands. MPI is investigating how it got there and how widespread it is.

## YOU CAN HELP

If you find velvetleaf, please help us to get rid of this weed by taking the following actions:

- » If possible, take a photo of the plant/s.
- » Mark the location so it is easy to find again.
- » Do not pull the plant out.
- » Contact MPI immediately on the **Pests and Diseases Hotline** – **0800 80 99 66**. Be assured all calls to the hotline are treated in confidence.
- » The call taker will refer your call to an MPI incursion investigator who will call you back to make arrangements for collecting the plants.
- » Inspect the rest of your crop to ensure there are no more plants.

## IF VELVETLEAF PLANTS HAVE SEED PODS

If you have suspected velvetleaf on your farm and are worried about plants dropping seed while you wait for the response team to visit, the following action could help reduce risk:

### Bag it – bend it

- » If seed capsules are present on the plant, carefully place a large bag, e.g. a fertiliser sack/bag or similar, over the seed pods and flowers on the plant and tie the bag tightly around the stem. It is important to make sure all seed heads are contained within the bag.
- » The velvetleaf plant should then be bent in half so that any seeds cannot escape out of the neck of the bag. The plant should remain in place until field staff visit.

## FARM MANAGEMENT FOR PROPERTIES WITH VELVETLEAF

A field team will visit properties with velvetleaf infestation and advise on management measures to prevent the pest being moved around the farm or out of the gate. This will include advice on grazing stock.

Velvetleaf is known to be present in New Zealand in the Waikato region. This new incursion appears to be related to imported fodder beet seed. MPI is working with industry organisations and regional councils to manage the situation. It is vital that plants are found and reported immediately so that they can be safely removed by MPI or its partners before they spread seed. Immediate reporting to MPI will give us the best chance of dealing with this weed.



Photo courtesy of Landcare Research

Velvetleaf buttery-yellow flowers



Photo courtesy of Landcare Research

Velvetleaf leaf



Velvetleaf multiple seedpods



The velvetleaf seedpod

MPI and Environment Canterbury, Otago Regional Council, Federated Farmers, Foundation for Arable Research, New Zealand Grain and Seed Trade Association, DairyNZ and Beef+Lamb New Zealand thank you for your help in this important work.



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