



Unwanted organisms and velvetleaf – how this affects you

“Unwanted organism” is a legal term given to organisms (e.g. plants, animals, bacteria, viruses) that are believed capable of causing harm to the environment (including farms) or human health.

Organisms are classified as “unwanted” by a Chief Technical Officer (CTO) – an experienced official in the Ministry for Primary Industries appointed to carry out the role on behalf of the Director-General.

Making an organism “unwanted” means the Ministry can place specific legal controls on the movement of the organism, for example velvetleaf.

Legal controls on velvetleaf movement

Velvetleaf is an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993. It is illegal to knowingly communicate (move), cause to be communicated, release, or cause to be released, or otherwise spread any pest or unwanted organism except under certain conditions including—

- In the course of and in accordance with a pest management plan; or
- With written permission from the CTO.

Be aware that velvetleaf seeds have the potential to be moved (communicated) in soil attached to the hooves of stock, attached to machinery, or after stock have eaten an infested crop.

What does all this mean for you?

- You must not move velvetleaf plants and seed or allow them to be moved off your property.
- You need to find, remove and dispose of any velvetleaf plants as explained in the velvetleaf factsheet.
- If velvetleaf plants have set seed in any crop on your farm, it is illegal to remove that crop from the property.
- It is vital that you remove any velvetleaf plants before they flower and set seed.

If you have velvetleaf on your property, we will arrange for an expert to help you develop a personalised farm management plan to guide farm management options that may lead to the elimination of velvetleaf over time.

Good on-farm biosecurity practices will help to reduce all pest impacts.

Growing and Protecting New Zealand

To report a suspected exotic disease or pest, please phone the Exotic Disease & Pest Emergency Hotline
0800 80 99 66