



The BHU Future Farming Centre

Permanent Agriculture and Horticulture: Science and Extension

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Crushing Californian thistles to death! Novel non-chemical weed control

The recently release report “Challenges for pest management in New Zealand”¹ by the Royal Society of NZ² highlighted the ongoing and substantial, economic and environmental costs associated with the loss of agricultural production due to pests diseases and weeds, which coupled with the on-going changes and increasing complexity in the way New Zealand deals with pest threats means there is increasing need for ongoing targeted efforts to enable new approaches and technologies to counter increasing pest, disease and weed resistance to agrichemicals and the de-registration of less safe sprays.

As part of its mission to find permanent solutions to these issues, the BHU Future Farming Centre has just released a guide <http://www.bhu.org.nz/future-farming-centre/information/bulletin/2014-v2/crushing-californian-thistles-to-death-and-other-on-farm-non-chemical-control-techniques> for farmers and growers on alternative non-chemical means of controlling one of NZ’s major agricultural and horticultural weeds - Californian thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). Due to the FFC’s considerable expertise in both science and ‘real-world’ sustainable farming, it knows about on-farm techniques often unknown to mainstream agricultural science.

These include:

- The use of deep ripping / subsoiling to crush the underground rhizome, instantly killing Californian thistle.
- The use of goats which are more partial to thistle than cattle and sheep and can provide increase profit.
- Mowing in the rain - a farmer developed technique that has been validated by AgResearch.
- Using novel machines such as CombCut to reduce fuel consumption.
- And using pasture and crop competition, both cash and cover crops, to out compete thistle.

These techniques, along with more well known approaches, such as regular mowing and herbicides, mean that producers have a considerably expanded range of management options at their disposal.

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For further information please contact:

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The BHU Future Farming Centre (FFC) is dedicated to the science and extension of permanent and whole-system agricultures and horticultures, such as organic agriculture, ecological agriculture and agroecology, for the benefit of all farmers and growers.

¹ <http://www.royalsociety.org.nz/expert-advice/information-papers/yr2014/pestmanagement/>

² <http://www.royalsociety.org.nz>

