

WEED FILE: Clover (Red & White)

ISSUED: MARCH 2025



Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) & White Clover (*Trifolium repens*)

DESCRIPTION

White and red clovers, though often valued as pasture plants, can become problematic weeds. Both are perennial legumes that spread via seeds and creeping stems.

White Clover grows low to the ground and spreads aggressively through stolons (runners) that root at nodes. Its leaves have three leaflets with white markings, and its white-to-pinkish flowers form in clusters.

Red Clover is a short-lived perennial (2-4 years), growing upright up to 50 cm tall. Its hairy leaves feature oval leaflets with a pale "v" marking. Red-purple flower heads, containing 15-30 florets, bloom from October to March. It has a deep taproot, providing good drought tolerance.

Both clovers produce abundant seeds and spread rapidly through seed dispersal and vegetative growth. Red clover is more resistant to clover root weevil, making it particularly persistent in some areas.

HABITAT

These clovers thrive throughout New Zealand, with specific preferences:

White Clover:

- Fertile soils with reliable moisture
- Well-managed pastures, lawns, and recreational areas
- Struggles in dry conditions

Red Clover:

- Summer-dry areas and less intensively grazed pastures
- Field margins, road verges, and disturbed ground

Both prefer full sun but tolerate partial shade. They're commonly found in cultivated areas, gardens, and fertile soil.



MANUAL REMOVAL

Control methods include hand pulling or digging, which is most effective on young plants in moist soil and requires removing stolons (white clover) or deep taproots (red clover). Regular mowing can prevent seed formation but won't eliminate established plants, as white clover adapts to low mowing. Deep cultivation may help, though stolon fragments can regrow. Combining methods and monitoring regrowth yield the best results.

HERBICIDE CONTROL

Spray Application

Selective Herbicides (generally pasture and turf friendly – check the product label).

Selection of which herbicide to use really depends on what other weeds you might be wanting to kill as well as clover. All of the following will kill clover but each product has different weeds they target.

- **Ranger** - 20g/ha or knapsack 1g/10L water for 500m². Great if spraying for dock and buttercup as well.
- **GrassMate** – also great for brushweeds and many broadleaf weeds: Aerial 10L/ha, Boom spray 2L/ha, or Knapsack spray 60ml/10L for 300m².
- **WHACK - 2,4-D 800** - Knapsack @ 50g/10L water. May only check clover so use with **Rainbow & Brown Dicamba 500 SL** at 12-14ml/10L water depending on what other weeds you are trying to remove.
- **Rainbow & Brown Dicamba 500 SL** 800ml + **Rainbow & Brown MCPA750** 1.5L in 200L water/ha – for turf
- **Rainbow & Brown Dicamba 500 SL** 800ml + **Rainbow & Brown MCPA750** 1.5L in 200L water/ha – for pasture. **Rainbow & Brown MCPA750** on its own won't kill clover.
- **Ralid** - Aerial 0.7L/ha, Handgun 70ml/100L, or Knapsack 17ml/10L – apply to actively growing plants. Great for thistles.
- **Ethoken 500 SC Herbicide** - Aerial/Boom rate 4L/ha or Handgun rate 400ml/100L. Will suppress clover.
- **Lawnclean** – for turf, lawn and sport grounds: Aerial 3-4.5L/ha per 200L water, Handgun 75-110ml/10L water, or Knapsack 75-110ml per 250m². Do not use on pasture or cropland.

Non-Selective Herbicides (generally will damage or check pasture, turf and many lawns – check the product label)

- **MSF600** – Aerial 50g/ha, Handgun @ 5g/100L, or Knapsack 1g/10L.

NOTE: Generally, glyphosate is not very effective against clover.

Orchards/Vineyards

- **GA200** (non-selective but low systemic movement so generally only affects the parts of plants hit by the spray). Kills most weeds and grasses: Seedling stage – Aerial 3-5L/ha, Handgun 300-500ml/100L, or Knapsack 45-75ml/15L. Flowering/established – Aerial 5-7.5L/ha, Handgun @ 500-750ml/100L, or Knapsack 75-115ml/15L.

Spot Treatment

Buckshot – apply 2-4g granules evenly over clovers. Grass friendly and good on many other broadleaf weeds also.

The library of Rainbow & Brown Weed Files now covers over 95 common problem weeds. You can read or download all of these Weed Files at our website. Click the "Weed Files" tab at the top of any page for the alphabetical list of titles.

www.rainbowbrown.co.nz