

FACTfile

Chickweed

Biology

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) germinates nearly all year round (between 2C and 30C) and will continue to grow slowly in low temperatures when other plants have stopped growing. The average number of seeds produced per plant is between 21200 and 2700. Seeds remain viable for up to 40 years. The stems are prostrate and form a dense mat of stem and leaves. It is therefore an extremely competitive weed. The leaves are ovate and acute, the flowers white with deeply lobed petals.

As with many weeds, open ground during sward establishment or bare spaces in older swards give chickweed seeds the chance to germinate and establish. They are a particular problem in autumn sowings where chickweed may overtake the slower establishing grasses and clovers.



A well established Chickweed plant



Chickweed

Chickweed has a high moisture content. This will cause difficulties when trying to wilt chickweed infested herbage for silage. Similarly it will mean a longer drying time for hay-making with subsequent loss of quality and greater risk from adverse weather. Chickweed may also interfere with silage fermentation adversely affecting the feeding



Chickweed flower

Control

The best method of control of mature plants is by complete burying through ploughing. Because the plant has a prostrate habit mowing is not an effective method of control.

It is worthwhile controlling a heavy infestation in a young sward in autumn. Failure to do so may severely depress grass production the following year.

A rapidly establishing sward will help reduce the competitiveness of chickweed. Likewise a well maintained and dense sward to help to reduce the likelihood of chickweed seeds germinating and establishing.

Chemical control will depend on specific situations. The presence of clover in the sward will limit the choice to clover-safe herbicides.

In established leys 2,4D, Mecoprop-p, Dicamba, or mixtures of these, loxynil and bromoxynil and ethofumesate are effective.

Trichlopyr, fluoroxypr and clopyralid or mixtures of these are also effective.

In newly sown leys MCPB and 2,4D-B will control seedling chickweed.

**NOT ALL GRASSLAND HERBICIDES ARE CLOVER SAFE SO ALWAYS SEEK EXPERT ADVICE.
ALWAYS READ THE LABEL AND FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURERS' RECOMMENDATION.**

For further technical advice please telephone Barenbrug UK Ltd on 01359 272000
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