

# **Knepp Ragwort Monitoring 2010**



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# Ragwort Monitoring 2010

## Introduction

Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* is toxic to livestock and its proliferation in formerly arable fields in Knepp has caused concern among some neighbours and adjacent landowners. A Ragwort Strategy for Knepp was produced in 2009<sup>1</sup>, in compliance with which a strip of a minimum of 50m metres around the southern block boundary will be topped annually in July. In addition, ragwort will be monitored annually in 16 fields across the New Barn / Brookhouse area. This part of the Estate has been selected as much of it is arable reversion and it also is bordered by those who have expressed concern about the ragwort. The southern block was fenced in spring 2009.

## Methodology.

16 fields were surveyed for ragwort with abundance assessed visually and ranked using the DAFOR (Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, Rare) scale (Table 1). The fields were selected more or less randomly, although examples from each vegetation type (except woodland and wetland) as recorded in 2005 (Greenaway 2006) were selected. Each field was photographed to provide a visual record. The survey was conducted in July, at a time when ragwort is in full flower and so clearly visible. Patrick Toe carried out the fieldwork and photography. Photographs of each field are given in the Appendix.

## Results.

**Table 1. Ragwort abundance, 2009 and 2010.**

Ragwort monitoring			
Recorder: Patrick Toe	2009	2010	
Field	Abundance (DAFOR)		FEP classification & code at 2005
Wild Flower Meadow A	A	R	Semi-improved grassland GO2
Lashmere	A	O	Arable AO1
New Barn 4	A	F	Arable reversion AR
Brookhouse 13	A	F	Arable reversion AR
Barn Field	A	F	Improved grassland GO1
Smokehouse 2	F	F	Arable reversion/semi-improved grassland AR/GR2
Hampshires 1	F	O	Arable reversion AR
Brookhouse 9	F	O	Arable reversion AR
Bentons Lane 1	F	O	Arable reversion AR
New Barn 5	F	F	Arable reversion AR
Honeypools Barn	F	O	Arable reversion AR
Oaklands 2	O	O	Semi-improved grassland GO2
Broomers	O	O	Arable reversion AR
Fresco West	O	F	Arable AO1
Waterworks West	O	O	Improved grassland GO1
Waterworks East	O	R	Improved grassland GO1

<sup>1</sup> [www.knepp.co.uk/wildlandproject/injuriousweedpolicy](http://www.knepp.co.uk/wildlandproject/injuriousweedpolicy)

## **Discussion.**

In comparison with the 2009 results, 11 of the 16 fields have a reduced amount of ragwort, 4 fields have the same amount and just one has more. This is encouraging news and is a trend that we hope will be ongoing. No field recorded 'Abundant', but this is only the first year since herbivores were introduced to this area of the Wildland Project. It is to be hoped that the level of grazing does not result in an increased amount of bare ground that could encourage an increase in ragwort.

The methodology is cost-effective, taking one person less than one day overall to carry out the fieldwork and approximately half a day for the report. It is unlikely that ragwort will ever be eradicated from Knepp, or indeed the wider countryside, and as a native wild plant, such an outcome would be undesirable.

## **References**

Greenaway, T.E. (2006) *Knepp Castle Estate: baseline ecological survey*. English Nature Research Report Number 693.

## Appendix



Barn Field



Bentons lane 1



Broomers Corner



Fresco West



Hampshires 1



Honeypools Barn





Lashmere



New barn 4



New Barn 5



Oaklands 2



Smokehouse 2



Waterworks East



Waterworks West



Wild Flower Meadow