

Management of Arable Weeds with Pigs

From: Catherine Hosie <CatherineHosie@wiltshirewildlife.org>
To: "nibblers@smartgroups.com" <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: [nibblers] Arable weed plots
Date: Tue, 7 Sep 2004 15:06:01 +0100
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

Apologies, as I realise that this is not strictly nibblers fare, but I was hoping that someone might be able to point me in the right direction to get some advice on the management of a difficult i.e. very vigorous and rank arable weed patch.

Thanks
Catherine Hosie
Reserves Officer
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

From: "Chloe Randall" <chloe@dunlossitestate.co.uk>
To: <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: Re: [nibblers] Arable weed plots
Date: Tue, 7 Sep 2004 21:58:06 +0100

If you have pigs on hand, it might be worth trying. I know I begin to sound obsessed, but they are pretty good with most things - although not docks, and they tend to leave rushes alone. If nothing else, they will probably thin out the vegetation so you can see what you have got left to deal with.

Chloe

Date: Wed, 08 Sep 2004 18:09:55 +0100
From: "David Burton" <David.Burton@English-Nature.Org.UK>
To: <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: Re: [nibblers] Arable weed plots
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

OK Chloe,

Here it is....article due in Conservation Land Management Mag. in next few months too!

A very brief summary of 2nd year of Langley Wood pig experiment

Bracken control: Spraying is most effective at reducing number of fronds, but pigs reduce number significantly. All treatments reduce bracken vigour. Litter: Only pigs reduce litter cover significantly. 2 years of pigs have more effect than just one. Rolling appears to reduce depth, but in fact just compresses the litter. Spraying leaves litter behind which disperses only very gradually and needs manual removal. Bluebells: Pigs reduce cover but do not eliminate. Rolling also appears to reduce cover. Could be beneficial, as bluebells can be highly competitive and can reduce floristic diversity. Oxalis: Pigs reduce cover. Are Oxalis roots more palatable than bluebell bulbs? Other ferns: Seriously reduced by spraying but not by pigs or rolling. Most surviving sprayed ferns are damaged. Tree seedlings: Large amount of germination by 18 months after pigs. Mainly *Betula pubescens*, but also *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Quercus robur* etc.

David Burton
Site Manager South Wiltshire NNRs
01980 620485

Date: Thu, 9 Sep 2004 09:43:32 +0100 (BST)
From: richard@collingridge.net
To: nibblers@smartgroups.com
Subject: [nibblers] RE: Arable weed plots
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

Catherine -

What's the objective for this weed patch? Are you aiming for more interesting arable weeds, or for some other habitat? What weeds are they?

Richard

From: Catherine Hosie <CatherineHosie@wiltshirewildlife.org>
To: "nibblers@smartgroups.com" <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: RE: [nibblers] RE: Arable weed plots
Date: Tue, 14 Sep 2004 12:32:45 +0100
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

Richard

The weed plot is a 2 acre patch that was intended to be a stone curlew plot in a previously arable field which is now in downland restoration. Everything went wrong when the plot was deep ploughed and now we have a really productive patch of creeping thistle, bulbous false oat-grass and sow thistles in a really nutrient poor downland restoration field - I have gleaned that the deep ploughing was a mistake and it should only have been lightly rotavated. Because the vegetation grows up so quickly, despite being rotavated annually the plot is not suitable for curlews, but does provide a really good seed supply for wintering birds. The decision was then made to try and use the site for arable weeds, rotavating half each spring, but the vegetation growth is such that any annuals would struggle to compete, our voluntary warden has seeded a few things with out much sign of success so far. I would like to keep the patch but am wondering what is the best management to control the false oat-grass, thistles etc and encourage more suitable conditions for arable weeds, whilst retaining a winter seed source for birds. Some of the options that have been suggested are deep ploughing again or spraying off the existing vegetation and starting again. The isn't a lot of money to do work, but something needs to be done - at the moment it isn't a good advertisement for anything.

Catherine

From: "Graham and Pat Bellamy" <gcbellamy@members.v21.co.uk>
To: <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: Re: [nibblers] RE: Arable weed plots
Date: Tue, 14 Sep 2004 22:40:43 +0100
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

Catherine. how old is the plot? ie when was the ploughing done?...what was the last crop, and any idea how long it was arable for? is the annual growth rotavated in in spring or is the vegetation gathered off?...how chalky is the soil- are there many chalk fragments?...this may tell me how similar your plot is to our weed infested patch!

Graham Bellamy
Beds WT

From: Catherine Hosie <CatherineHosie@wiltshirewildlife.org>
To: "nibblers@smartgroups.com" <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: RE: [nibblers] RE: Arable weed plots
Date: Wed, 15 Sep 2004 11:11:23 +0100
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

Hi Graham

The plot was ploughed and cultivated in April 1999, the last crop was Barley harvested autumn 1998, before that the field had been arable for some years not sure how many though. The growth has been rotavated-in in spring, half each year (it's a 2 acre plot). The soil in the plot and most of the restoration is described as Andover - Shallow brown calcareous well drained flinty silty clay loam directly over chalk within 30cm depth and there is a fair amount of chalk fragments on the surface. The difference in productivity between the ploughed plot and the rest of the restoration field though is incredible. The restoration field vegetation is very sparse with lots of open grass just - about 50% vegetation cover whilst the plot is rank as previously described.

If there are any similarities to your patch I'd be interested to know how you manage it.

Catherine
Catherine Hosie
Reserves Officer
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

From: "Graham and Pat Bellamy" <gcbellamy@members.v21.co.uk>
To: <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: Re: [nibblers] RE: Arable weed plots

Date: Wed, 15 Sep 2004 22:40:36 +0100
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

Catherine. Thanks.

Our plot is about an acre on the edge of a grassland recreation from arable...now 12 years old from a long standing arable field...arable late 50`s at least. part of ours is autumn ploughed, another section spring ploughed and another section when we feel like it! Last crop was rape and we have quite a vigorous growth of white mustard each year with increasing great willow herb, rosebay willowherb, patches of nettle. Our field also was deep ploughed to start with, ploughing now shallow after growth is swiped first, the plough is then harrowed in. not sure what soil series we have ..but it looks white/pale with lots chalky fragments (lower chalk origin mostly).

We are not too happy with our plot either.. and are considering weed wipe or even grazing sheep early in the year to retard early growth and hope growth will be droughted in what ever passes as a normal summer.

I have another arable weed strip that is just ploughed every two or three years and left to weather with no harrowing..this stays in good condition for a year or two for small arable weeds, and has been grazed by sheep when they are on the field as a whole.

no solution to offer...but might help to know our attempt is not what we expected either...but what do you think of grazing?

Graham

From: "Symes, Nigel" <nigel.symes@rspb.org.uk>
To: "nibblers@smartgroups.com" <nibblers@smartgroups.com>
Subject: RE: [nibblers] Arable weed plots
Date: Fri, 10 Sep 2004 10:23:41 +0100
Reply-To: nibblers@smartgroups.com

Couple of observations:

Pigs and bluebells: encouraged to note that they only reduce cover – wild boar are often accused of eradication in W Europe and hence will do so if they establish widely in UK, so pigs evidence would presumably be a useful guide.

Spraying and ferns: depends on conditions at spray site but we used asulam through an ULVA (atomiser type applicator) to manage dense continuous bracken and 'discovered' in the following year that there were other species present because they had survived under the umbrella of bracken ie no penetration of chemical through the closed canopy.

Cheers
Nigel

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