

Grazing: Will it eat away at the gorse?

Bringing in the Sheep or Goats

Grazing, alone, will not control gorse. But grazing can be used to help prevent the spread of gorse.

Goats are the most effective animals at controlling gorse. Sheep are moderately effective at controlling gorse seedlings.

Carefully control the animals' range so valuable plants (especially vulnerable newly emerging natives) are not at risk of being munched.

Outcomes to Consider

Grazing is not the definitive answer to gorse control. The following table shows some benefits and disadvantages of grazing.

Grazing can be useful in the following circumstances	Disadvantages of Grazing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Once a dense gorse infestation has been removed and the pasture re-established, it can be subjected to periodic grazing by sheep during spring and summer to prevent the establishment of gorse seedlings. Avoid overgrazing the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Significant control of established gorse plants cannot be achieved by sheep grazing alone as sheep prefer pasture and will only browse established gorse bushes in spring or when alternative food is in short supply.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Goats prefer to browse young gorse shoots rather than graze growing pasture. Goats remove flowers and defoliate bushes, browsing them back to stumps when the stocking rate is high enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Well established gorse bushes are not readily killed by browsing and are capable of recovery, even after several years of browsing, if the goats are removed from the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sheep or goat grazing on new growth after fire can be an effective chemical-free control method. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Goats will graze all palatable plants, so their access needs to be restricted to gorse regrowth only. Do not let them graze emerging natives.

Conclusion

Grazing should be used as part of an integrated weed management system. It won't kill established gorse plants by itself.