

# Golden Dodder

## (*Cuscuta campestris*)

Find out about this invasive weed, what we're doing about it and how you can help stop it spreading

Golden dodder is a parasitic plant which sucks the nutrients out of its host plants, weakening and often killing them. It also smothers neighbouring plants with a mass of golden tendrils.

**Unwanted Organism Status (New Zealand).** Golden dodder has been listed as an Unwanted Organism in New Zealand. This means the species can cause harm to natural and physical resources. Under the Biosecurity Act 1993, it is an offence to breed, sell or release *Cuscuta campestris*. It is also an offence to knowingly cause multiplication of the plant.

**It is only found in the Waikato region.** Golden dodder is known to exist in a cluster of northern Waikato wetlands. This is concerning because it has recently spread to new wetland habitats and has the potential to continue its spread along access routes, stream banks, wetlands and waterways.

**It is highly toxic to stock and can smother animal food such as clover.** Cattle feeding in pasture adjacent to contaminated areas are at serious risk if they consume golden dodder.

**It can smother wetland plants including duck food.** A threat to native ecosystems in the wetland including bittern habitat, it will also reduce the food source for ducks over the winter period.

Golden dodder spreading to nearby plants



Close up of golden dodder parasitic on host plant

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Report sightings
- Clean your gear
- Close gates behind you



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

**Golden dodder emerges in the summer months when host plants become abundant after wetland water level drops.** This parasitic plant appears in early summer with yellow to orange leafless, threadlike stems that resemble spaghetti. The stem produces tendrils that coil around other plants. When the tendrils contact a suitable host, they develop root-like structures (haustoria) that suck nutrients and water from the host plant.

It is characterised by rapid growth of up to 5 metres in two months, smothering surrounding plants.

Numerous small white or greenish flowers are arranged in compact clusters. A single golden dodder plant can produce up to 16,000 seeds and form a long-lived seed bank (ten years or more).

Once established, golden dodder can spread via plant fragments or seeds carried by water, vehicles, equipment, clothing or animals, or by seeds ingested and dispersed by birds.

**Several hundred crop and weed species have been reported as hosts.** Golden dodder parasitises an extremely wide range of herbaceous hosts found in pasture, horticultural crops and wetland vegetation, including several exotic and a few native species.

If left unchecked at Whangamarino Wetland, Lake Whangape, Lake Rotongaro and Lake Rotongaroiti, golden dodder infestations are expected to increase in distribution and abundance with the potential to spread into surrounding farmlands and other wetland sites by human activities, water birds and water movement.

**Report sightings of golden dodder with accurate location details to:  
DOC on 0800 DOCHOT  
(0800 362 468) or  
WRC on 0800 800 401**

## What are we doing about it?

**We have a real opportunity to contain this weed,** because it has only been found at a few locations in New Zealand, all within the wider Huntly area, Waikato.

**DOC is working to control it.** Work includes annual ground and aerial control, surveillance, and monitoring of golden dodder within the infestation area and a buffer surrounding it timed to prevent plants from seeding. The biosecurity and conservation outcomes are to safeguard surrounding farmlands from golden dodder invasion and to protect susceptible native habitat in the wetland, respectively.

## What can you do?

**Report any new sightings of golden dodder to DOC or the Waikato Regional Council.** The recent discovery of golden dodder below the weir was a chance sighting by DOC staff. If you are out in wetlands, keep your eyes open for golden dodder.

**The risk of it spreading is high.** Vehicles, equipment, clothing and cattle could transport plant fragments or seed to other duck hunting or wetland areas in the Waikato or beyond.

**Hunters, farmers and recreational users:** Check dogs, boots, boats, clothes and gear for weed fragments and seeds before you leave the area. Stock are also able to spread this weed so keep them out of infested sites. Keep the Whangamarino Wetland access gate closed so stock can't move along the causeway and banks of the stream.

Aerial view of golden dodder discs at Whangamarino Wetland

