



Demonstration of a bracken crusher trailed on an ATV - courtesy of [www.brackenbruiser.co.uk](http://www.brackenbruiser.co.uk)



Green area in middle ground has been cleared by rolling and crushing the bracken



Area of gorse before clearing



Same area after cutting down the gorse and burning the cleared brash



Field of rushes before treatments

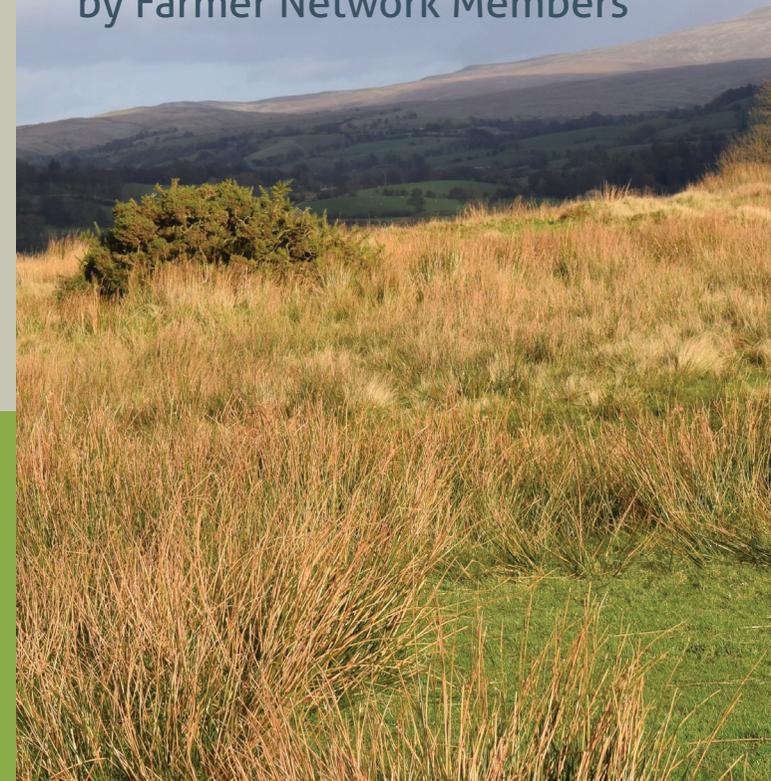


Same field after weed wiping using Glyphosate chemical and then cut using a pasture topper



# BRACKEN, GORSE AND RUSH CONTROL

Tried and Tested Methods used by Farmer Network Members



Visit the Farmer Network website [www.thefarmernetwork.co.uk/farm-trials](http://www.thefarmernetwork.co.uk/farm-trials) for links to relevant technical reports and a glossary of herbicides, to use with this leaflet

The Farm Trials project was funded by the Prince's Countryside Fund and delivered by The Farmer Network to help upland farmers target inputs and improve business resilience.

# FARMER NETWORK MEMBERS' EXPERIENCE

## Mowing, Topping and Cutting

## Spraying and Weed Wiping

## Other techniques

### Bracken Control

Cutting is effective if you keep at it, 2 or 3 times per season in mid to late summer. Cutting weakens the plant so it doesn't grow back as strong and the canopy declines.

Aerial spraying by helicopter for larger areas hasn't proved to be very effective. Spraying and weed wiping using Asulam or Glyphosate in late summer is effective in accessible areas, but has to be kept on top of.

Rolling, or crushing with flail chains, or dragging a tyre across twice a year bruises the plant and is effective over a few years. Cattle help to break up bracken beds in summer. Feeding stock on here in winter slows growth. Pigs root it up, but can pull the grass up too, and high stocking levels are needed.

### Gorse Control

Cutting seems to be the most popular and effective way to initially get rid of gorse. But other scrub and weeds can start to grow in areas that have been cleared.

After cutting, the stumps are sprayed with Grazon, or holes are drilled in the stumps and filled with Glyphosate, or re-growth is weed-wiped when around 4" high. Cleared areas need to be kept on top of to prevent re-growth.

After cutting, the shrub can be burned safely, in the right conditions.

### Soft Rush Control

Cutting, topping or mowing does not seem to be very effective in the long term. It works best on flatter pastures with four-wheel drive tractors, but in many places they just grow back stronger and bigger.

The main control method is spraying with MCPA and a wetter in mid-July OR weed wiping with Glyphosate. Some farmers cut 4 weeks after spraying, others leave them uncut. Some cut first and then spray the regrowth. Continuity is key, spraying and cutting annually until they wear out.

Cutting or spraying work best when combined with encouraging grass to compete with rushes e.g. liming; dealing with soil compaction or drainage problems; hard grazing in dry conditions; slurry application. Some of these are only suitable on lower, more intensive farming systems.