

# Treating weeds in irrigation channels

## Macalister Irrigation District

Aquatic weeds block the flow of water in our irrigation channels which prevents us from providing reliable service to our customers. Weeds need to be removed by machines or treated with herbicide to ensure our channel systems are free from obstructions.

At times, we treat weeds that float or grow under water with a herbicide called Magnacide. This has proven to be the best way for us to control weeds that cause water delivery problems to our customers.

Here are some answers to common questions about Magnacide and our use of it.

## Southern Rural Waters use of Magnacide

### What is Magnacide?

Magnacide is a herbicide used worldwide to control submerged and floating weeds in irrigation channels.

This treatment has been used in Australia since 1977. Southern Rural Water (SRW) has used Magnacide many times to control weeds in their irrigation channels.

Magnacide is registered with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and the United States Environment Protection Agency for the control of submerged weeds.

### Why did SRW decide to use this particular herbicide?

Herbicide is the most effective way of dealing with submerged weeds growing in the channels. Mechanical removal requires weeds to grow before they can be removed. This is very slow, it damages channels and is only partly effective.

Magnacide is approved by the APVMA for use in Australia to treat these types of weeds and has been proven to deliver good results.

### Why does this herbicide need to be used now?

Aquatic weeds tend to grow when the weather gets warmer. Treating in late Spring or early Summer will limit the weed growth as we move into our peak summer delivery period.

### Will customers and the community be notified of the treatment?

Yes, each time this product is used SRW:

- notifies the public by a public notice in the 'Gippsland Times' newspaper.
- writes to customers whose properties adjoin the section of channel we will be treating.



### **How is the herbicide used in the channels?**

The channel where the herbicide is applied is isolated to control the movement of water. During this process, SRW will regularly sample water to monitor Magnicide levels and ensure they return to zero.

SRW will not release water from outfalls into any natural waterway for 72 hours as a safeguard.

### **How does SRW ensure that no herbicide reaches waterways?**

We isolate all spur channels and outfall doors and place them in a locked mode to prevent them from being opened remotely. This means the doors can only be re-opened manually while on site once the process is finished.

Temporary earthen dams are also placed in drains leading to waterways to ensure water cannot enter the drain system, even if water leaks past the outfall doors.

### **What action will SRW take to prevent spillage?**

The herbicide can only be removed from its cylinder (fitted with safety valves) by pumping in dry nitrogen as a propellant. The herbicide is added into the channel by a qualified operator.

This herbicide is transported in vehicles, equipped with fittings to ensure cylinders cannot tip over or be damaged.

It is highly unlikely a spill will occur, but we carry spill containment equipment and soda ash to absorb the chemical as a precaution.

### **Do other organisations use Magnicide?**

Yes, Magnicide is used extensively in Australia and other countries to control weed growth in irrigation channels.

### **About Magnicide**

#### **How does Magnicide work?**

Magnicide is a non-selective biocide that attacks and alters the cell structure of plants reliant on dissolved oxygen in water. It is toxic to fish and crustaceans who also take dissolved oxygen from water through their gill-based respiratory system. Magnicide acts as a 'chemical mower', stripping plants at the base and returning channel capacity within one week of application. It does not permanently damage the root system and weeds will slowly regrow.

#### **What weeds are being targeted in the channels?**

This type of treatment is for submersed aquatic weeds such as ribbon weed and floating club rush.

## What are the likely effects on humans if they come into direct contact with the herbicide?

When used correctly, Magnacide does not have any long-term effects on people or the environment.

During the treatment process, SRW recommends the following:

- Avoid contact with channel water.
- Do not swim in channels at any time.
- Avoid working near channels. If this is not possible, contact SRW for further information.
- Seek medical advice if contact occurs.

## What do I do if my child or I swallow treated water from channels?

Do not induce vomiting. Call the 13 11 26 Victorian Poisons Hotline which will advise you what to do next.

## Is it likely to affect stock if they drink or enter treated water?

Due to the concentration levels we use, it is highly unlikely that stock will suffer any adverse effects. However SRW recommends not to use treated water for stock and domestic purposes for 72 hours after the commencement of the treatment process.

## What happens if my dog inadvertently swims or drinks from the channel?

Again, it is highly unlikely your dog will be effected. If your dog does show signs of distress, please do not encourage it to vomit. Contact your veterinary clinic straight away.

## Can I still irrigate?

No orders will be delivered during the treatment period.

## Will Magnacide kill fish?

Fish are very sensitive to this herbicide due to their gill-based respiratory system having a similar cell structure to the submerged weeds. We expect that all fish in the Magnacide treated channels will perish. Experience has shown nearly all fish that are killed are European Carp.

## Contingency plans

### What happens if fish are killed and washed down the channel system near my property?

SRW will remove fish killed in the process. Water Services Officers will patrol the channels with nets to collect fish remains for one week after treatment.

Customers and community members are encouraged to contact SRW on 1300 139 510 if they see dead fish in a channel.

## More information

For more information, please contact Southern Rural Water on 1300 139 510, or visit [www.srw.com.au](http://www.srw.com.au)



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