



Wallowa County Weed Watch

Medusahead Rye

**Medusahead Rye is crowding out western rangeland plants!
Nothing eats this aggressive weed!!**

The Problem

Medusahead out competes annual plants and perennial grass seedlings. If given a chance it will form exclusive stands. Medusahead is tough and unpalatable - very poor forage! Medusahead stands decimate habitat for livestock and wildlife. The barbed awns can injure animals. Medusahead also causes terrible soil erosion.

Several factors make Medusahead extremely competitive. It produces many seeds that germinate quickly year round. It also has roots that grow in winter. The roots can reach 40 inches deep, helping the plant use soil moisture and get a jumpstart on spring growth. The plant litter is slow to decompose and inhibits seedlings of other plants. This litter also creates fuel for intense damaging fires. These fires, in turn, allow Medusahead to spread in leaps and bounds!

In Wallowa County, Medusahead infestations have been identified in the Wallowa River Canyons and lower Minam. Medusahead is ranked as a top priority weed by Wallowa County and the state of Oregon. It requires aggressive treatment measures.

Identification

Medusahead Rye is an annual grass, ranging in height from 8 to 20 inches. Stems are slender and wiry with a few short, narrow leaves. The seedheads have two components: 1) seeds with long awns that twist when dry and 2) bristles or spikes that stay on the stem all year. The seeds and awns fall off in late summer, leaving only the bristles, which make the grass look like a 'bottlebrush'. Old stands of Medusahead form gray mats of dead plants that blanket the ground.

Treatment

Medusahead can be controlled by repeated mowing or burning, followed by reseeding and grazing management. Medusahead thrives in overgrazed areas. Winter and early spring grazing of Medusahead infestations offers the best advantage to desirable plants. Repeated heavy sheep grazing before seed set can reduce Medusahead seed crop.

Medusahead can also be controlled by spraying Plateau or Roundup prior to seed formation, or Plateau after germination in the fall. Establishing healthy plant communities, by planting both broadleaves and grasses, is essential to long-term success.
Contact your local weed manager for more information.



Young stand

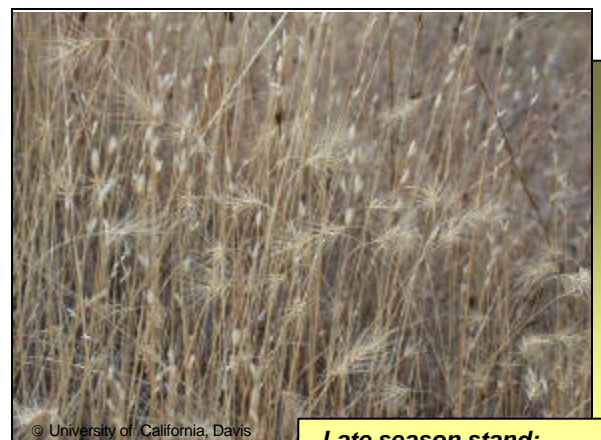


Seed heads with long awns and bristles (left)



1) Twisted awns attached to seeds (above)

2) Looks like "bottlebrush" after seeds fall off



Late season stand: "bottlebrush" look

Read and follow all label instructions when applying herbicides. Trade names have been used to simplify instructions and no endorsement or warranty is expressed or implied by the Wallowa County Weed Board or this brochure.

For more information or to report weed sites call:

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