Rangeland-Pasture Recommendations

Cheatgrass Identification and Management

Commonly referred to as cheatgrass, (Bromus tectorum) it is also known as downy brome, downy cheat and bronco grass. It is widely distributed throughout the United States and has been reported to be the dominant species on more than 100 million acres of the intermountain west. Cheatgrass is unique in that it occupies a dual role as a serious weed and important early season forage. In terms of volume of forage produced and extent of area covered it is the single most important spring forage. Cheatgrass can maintain dominance for many years on sites where native vegetation has been eliminated or severely reduced by grazing, cultivation or fire.

Cheatgrass is a winter annual member of the grass (Poaceae) family. It reproduces by seed which germinates in the fall, over winters as a seedling and flowers in the spring. Seed can remain viable in the soil for 2 to 5 years. Cheatgrass can grow in almost any soil type and readily adapts to varying precipitation. Cheatgrass can be several inches to more than 18 inches tall. It has a nodding seed head with many finely hairy drooping spikelets. As it matures the seed heads and foliage often become reddish and then progress to a light tan. The mature seeds readily penetrate clothing and are frequently a problem in dog's ears and noses.

Cheatgrass is found in both disturbed and undisturbed sites. The largest infestations are usually found in overgrazed range and pasture, abandoned fields, eroded sites and waste areas. The greatest competitive advantage following a fire goes to cheatgrass because the native shrubs and perennial grasses cannot recover as quickly allowing cheatgrass to establish a monoculture.

On the backside of this sheet are cheatgrass management recommendations. If you have any questions, please contact the Weld County Public Works Dept., Weed Division at (970) 304-6496 ext. 3770. Please visit our website at www.weldweeds.org

Recommended management methods:

Cultural – Establishment of selected, aggressive grasses can be an effective cultural control of cheatgrass. Contact your local CSU Extension office or Natural Resources Conservation Service office for seed mix recommendations. Good grazing management will stimulate grass growth and keep pastures healthy. Healthy pastures may be more resistant to cheatgrass invasion bare spots caused by overgrazing are prime habitat for weed infestations.

Mechanical – Fire, mowing, grazing, tillage, and inter-seeding competitive species have all shown promise in reducing cheatgrass populations. Long lasting control requires a combination of chemical, physical, vegetative suppression and proper livestock management.

Biological –Biological control is limited. Rabbits and mice will feed extensively on the seedlings as will migratory grasshoppers. But there is no long term biocontrol agent available.

Herbicides – The following are recommendations for herbicides that can be applied to range and pasturelands. Always read, understand, and follow label directions. The herbicide label is the LAW!

Herbicide	Rate	Application Timing/Comments
Plateau	4 to 6 oz/acre	Fall application prior to a hard freeze is optimum. Can also make application during early spring growth. Use a methylated seed oil surfactant (MSO) at 0.32 oz/gal water or 1 qt/100 gal water. The 12 oz rate of Plateau may cause injury to some cool season grasses. Can safely be used under trees.
Panoramic 2 SL	6 – 12 Oz/Acre	Apply pre- or post emergent in late summer or early fall. Use a MSO surfactant at 0.32 oz/gal or 1 qt/100gal water. The 12 oz rate of Panoramic 2SL may cause injury to some cool season grasses. Can safely be used under trees.
*Roundup Ultra *Non-selective herbicide.	4 –5 qts./acre or 4 –5 oz/gal water	Apply in fall or early spring Add a non-ionic surfactant @ 0.32oz/gal water or 1 qt/100 gal water. Use caution when applying near grasses or other desirable vegetation. Roundup will possibly kill surrounding vegetation.