



INVASIVE PLANTS

What are Invasive Plants?

They are plants that have been introduced into an environment in which they did not evolve; therefore, they usually have no natural enemies. “These plants are characteristically adaptable, aggressive, and have high reproductive capacity. Their vigor combined with a lack of natural enemies often leads to outbreak populations.” (USDA)



Capital Press- Goats grazing Leafy Spurge

What are the Impacts of Invasive Plants?

Invasive plants *degrade* wildlife habitat & forage. Increase soil erosion and *stream sedimentation*, deplete soil moisture and nutrient levels, and alter fire tendencies.

For example, prior to the invasion of cheat grass in sagebrush steppe ecosystems, fires occurred between 60 to 110 years. However, cheat grass has changed the fire frequency to 3 to 5 years (Baldwin, Review of Livestock Grazing & Range Management in Utah). This change leads to a decrease in the more desirable native plants, who do not recover from fire as quickly as the exotic species, which recover from fire quickly and then invade and take over the land.

How does Livestock Grazing Manage Invasive Plants?

Prescribed livestock grazing can provide more effective and lasting weed control than herbicides. It will also have less effect on non-target, native plants. The goal of using livestock to control weeds is to, thin vegetation to place the targeted invasive plant at a competitive disadvantage relative to other plants in the *community*. There are two approaches to this- “1) use grazing management that harms the *target weed* by grazing at the time and frequency when the weed is most vulnerable, and 2) modify the grazing behavior of animals to cause them to concentrate their grazing efforts on the target weed.” (Frost & Launchbaugh “Rangelands Prescription Grazing”).

Select Invasive Species found in Idaho-

Medusahead Wild Rye

Common Name:

Medusahead

Type- Annual Grass

Origin- Mediterranean

Impact on Rangelands-

Crowds out native species and forage for livestock.

Description: It contains silica, which is harsh and *unpalatable* to livestock,

Grazing time: early growing stage



Medusahead @ invasive.org

Characteristics: when Medusahead has matured it dries out and has stiff awns and hard florets (pictured at the right) that can injure the eyes and mouths of grazing animals. It contains silica which is harsh and unpalatable to livestock. It spreads quickly because, of its lack of palatability to livestock and to seed eating birds, which increases the amount of seeds.



Downy Brome

Common Name: Cheat Grass

Type: Annual grass

Origin: Europe and Asia



Cheatgrass @invasive.org

Impacts: It crowds out native grasses and creates wildfire hazards.

Grazing time: Early growing stages

Characteristics: When it dries out, it can injure livestock and other animals and they don't like to eat it.

Ventenata (relatively new to Pacific Northwest)

Common Name: Wiregrass

Origin: Mediterranean region

Impacts: It rapidly infests newly seeded or poorly managed grass areas. It has no known forage value for wildlife and livestock; it causes soil to be prone to erosion due to its shallow rooting depth, and it limits the flow of waterways and reduces land value.

Grazing time: early spring, however the stems harden and become unpalatable quickly.

Characteristics: Grows 6-18 inches tall, has vibrant green stems, dark red or black nodes, and shallow roots in the early season. In the late season it is silvery-green to tan, and stems become wiry with few leaves.



Ventenata by NRCS

Junipers

Origin: A native plant to Idaho. Usually native plants do not become invasive; however, during the past 100 years or so, once-open woodlands of western juniper have become dense stands. Control of natural wildfires is thought to be one of the causes of this dramatic change in this ecosystem.

Junipers @cnr.uidaho.edu

Impacts: they crowd out tasty, nutritious understory plants that cattle and wildlife



could otherwise graze or browse. Soil erosion occurs and there is a decrease in soil nutrients.

Characteristics: Coniferous tree, can grow to a height of 80 feet or more, has needlelike or scale like leaves, small blue colored berries, and seed filled cones.

Words to Know:

Community- an area of land with different species of plants

Stream Sedimentation: deposits of soil at the bottom of a river where the water slows down

Unpalatable: Does not taste good

Target weed: invasive plant that is not wanted

Brought to you by the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission with information from the following- Cheatgrass & Medusa Head-United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), & Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Ventenata- University of Idaho Department of Rangeland Management & Ecology- Tim Prather & Junipers- "Biology, Ecology, And Management of Western Junipers" by Oregon State University.

For More Information visit- www.idrange.org