



Controlling Weeds in Horse Pastures

Weeds are a common problem for landowners with both large and small acreages throughout Wyoming. While many people consider weeds to be an agricultural problem, the reality is that they also have serious impacts on rangelands, roadsides, and suburban areas.

For small-acreage landowners, weed problems are often at higher levels due to increased land disturbance and heavy grazing pressure. If not properly managed, even a few animals kept on in a small area can be a recipe for disaster. Grazing animals will selectively feed on the most desirable grasses and forbs while leaving the bitter, coarse, spiny, and generally unpalatable plants untouched. While most desirable grasses and forbs are adapted to some grazing, overuse eventually weakens them to the point of decline and even death, giving the weeds the chance they need to get well established. Weeds also can affect the nutrition and health of livestock, especially horses.

Educating yourself to proper pasture management, weed identification, and how weeds spread, will not only help keep your horse healthy, but will also increase the aesthetic view of the range or acreage. There are 22 weeds in Wyoming which are considered “Noxious” by the Weed and Pest. Weeds designated as noxious are the responsibility of the landowner to control according to state law. There is a Weed and Pest office located in all counties which offers advice on controlling these weeds.

The first step to weed control is to correctly identify the weeds in your pasture. Weeds can be controlled by using chemicals or biological methods. The final step in controlling weeds is having a healthy pasture. This can be

accomplished by proper grazing management, use of competitive grasses, and proper irrigation methods.

There are several sources of information concerning weeds and weed management available to Wyoming residents. Local Cooperative Extension Service offices and Weed and Pest District offices can provide advice and resources for understanding weeds and developing effective weed-management strategies. Publications that can help include *Weeds of the West* and the *Weed Management Handbook for Montana, Utah, and Wyoming*.

Web sites offering weed information include the Wyoming Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey at w3.uwyo.edu/~caps/caps.html, the Wyoming Weed and Pest Council at wyoweed.org, the Weed Science Society of America at www.wssa.net, and the Center for Invasive Plant Management at www.weedcenter.org.



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