



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 an agricultural problem, the reality is weeds 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 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 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 it will also increase the aesthetic view of the range or acreage. There are 25 weeds in Wyoming considered "noxious" by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. Weeds designated as noxious are the responsibility of the landowner to control, according to state law. There are weed and pest offices located in all counties that offer advice on controlling these weeds.

The first step to control is to correctly identify the weeds in a pasture. Weeds can be controlled by using chemical, biological, or mechanical 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 resi-

dents. Local University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) offices and weed and pest district offices can provide advice and resources for understanding weeds and developing effective weed-management strategies. A list of UW CES offices can be found at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/Counties.asp>. Contact information for weed and pest offices is at http://www.wyoweed.org/wp_dist.html.

Publications that can help include *Weeds of the West* at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/wyoweed/wyoweed.htm>, and the *Weed Management Handbook for Montana, Utah, and Wyoming* at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/pubs.asp>.

Web sites offering weed information include the Wyoming Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey at www.uwyo.edu/capsweb, 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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