

Noxious Weed Report for June 13

Hi, this is the Noxious Weed Report for June 13.

This week, since we are finding more and more infestations while we're out inspecting, I would like to talk about Hoary alyssum. Hoary alyssum is a Class B-designate noxious weed, which means that it is required control in Okanogan County. It's an invasive plant that rapidly spreads in pastures and meadows, and adapts to dry conditions and open disturbed areas as well. It is unfortunately spreading rapidly in Okanogan County.

All parts of Hoary alyssum are toxic to livestock as fresh or dried plants and can potentially cause death in horses. It is most toxic from spring until fall. Since it grows rapidly in pastures, it's extremely important to take special care when buying hay for your animals. Try to buy your hay from a trustworthy source, ideally someone you are familiar with. If at all possible, ask your hay supplier to let you take a look at his or her product before you have it delivered to your location and feed it to your horses.

The plants are in the mustard family; they are annuals, biennials or short-lived perennials growing 1 – 3 ½ feet tall. It is covered in small hairs, which gives it a silver-gray color. The leaves at the base of the plants are oblong in shape, and are wider toward the tips. The stem leaves are alternately arranged and decrease in size up the stem.

Flower clusters bloom from the bottom up, and each flower is on a short stalk. The flowers appear to have 8 petals, but in reality they have 4 petals which are deeply cleft down the middle. The seeds go up the stems, and are in semi-inflated pods, rounded, and ¼ inch long.

Maintaining healthy, desired forage is probably the best option to control Hoary alyssum and keep new infestations from establishing. Mowing can be helpful before seed set but can spread mature seeds. Hoeing or pulling of plants when the soil is moist works well, but the root crown must be removed and all of the plants must be disposed of properly. Some herbicides can be effective on Hoary alyssum. Please call our office at 422-7165 if you would like more information on control of this invasive noxious weed, or if you suspect you might have an infestation on your property and need help with identification.

Also, please look over our website at okanogancounty.org/nw, for information about noxious weeds and their control. You'll also find links to many other resources that can be very helpful in your noxious weed control efforts.