

Noxious Weed Report for November 15

Hi, this is the noxious weed report for November 15th.

This week I would like to again remind everyone that we have our fall pesticide license recertification class coming up on December 7th, at the Twelve Tribes Resort Casino. This year's class will run from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm and will be worth 6 credits toward your pesticide license recertification. There are still plenty of seats for those folks who need credits, but we are requiring that folks pre-register with our office for the class, so if you would like to attend, be sure to give us a call at 422-7165 to ensure your seat.

Since one of the talks at the recertification class is "Invasive Annual Grasses of North Central Washington", this week I thought I would briefly talk about Downy Brome, which is one of the grasses that will be discussed during the class.

Downy Brome, commonly known as Cheatgrass, can be found throughout much of Okanogan County, but grows especially well in open disturbed areas, roadsides, fields, rangelands, crops, and in other natural plant communities. Cheatgrass can be a big problem, as it: suppresses other grasses in rangeland settings, easily infests agricultural fields, and has sharp seeds which can injure pets and grazing animals.

Cheatgrass does however have at least one redeeming feature, as it does serve as an early season source of forage for livestock, before the plants start producing seed. However, this redeeming feature is negated by the fact that Cheatgrass does suppress perennial grasses, which would extend the grazing season. Cheatgrass also promotes more frequent and severe wildfires in the areas where it is allowed to establish, as the plants mature and dry out very early in the growing season, providing a heavy load of combustible fuel that will readily ignite.

Cheatgrass quickly spreads to new areas, as the seeds disperse short distances with the wind and rodent activity or over large distances by clinging to the fur, feathers, and feet of animals, or the shoes and clothing of people. Once seeds have been disbursed to a new area, Cheatgrass is quickly able to out-compete other plants in the area, as seedling plants emerge in the fall giving them a leg-up over other vegetation that does not emerge until spring.

Finally, I would like to remind everyone that our November Weed Board Meeting will be held this afternoon because of the Thanksgiving holiday next week. Today's meeting will be held in the Commissioners' Hearing Room at 4:00 pm. At the meeting, we will be discussing the use of drones and a GoPro Camera to make educational noxious weed identification and control videos, which should be a fairly interesting discussion. As with all of our board meetings, we encourage everyone to attend and provide input.