

Hi, this is the noxious weed report for October 18.

This week I would like to talk about Cheatgrass. Cheatgrass, also called Downey Brome, is a non-native, highly invasive grass, found in most counties throughout Washington State. Cheatgrass is an annual grass, which can offer some green forage for livestock in the spring but often goes to seed and turns brown by May, becoming un-palatable to most livestock. Plants range from 3 to 30 inches tall and have drooping seed heads that become brittle as the plant dries. The long, barbed awns on Cheatgrass seeds cling to clothing and animals, which aids in their dispersal.

Our pets and other animals can also be injured by dry Cheatgrass seeds in late summer and early fall because of the barbs on them which allow the seeds to work their way into their fur, paws, and ears, but not work their way back out, much like the one-way movement of porcupine quills. And, it's an incredible nuisance to us as we find ourselves spending valuable time picking the seeds out of our shoes and socks. Cheatgrass also creates an added danger during the fire season by adding a large amount of dry fuels early in the summer.

This year we put in a proposal to the State Noxious Weed Board asking that Cheatgrass be added to the Washington State Noxious Weed List in 2018 as a Class C Noxious Weed throughout the State of Washington. Due to the widespread distribution of Cheatgrass and its high rate of spread, it is our opinion that Cheatgrass should only be included as a Class C Noxious Weed, which would allow county noxious weed control boards to provide Cheatgrass information to their landowners, without imposing the added burden of requiring control.

Over the past several years, many landowners in Okanogan County have begun efforts to control Cheatgrass on their property, and we have had several of them approach our office with requests for information on how to control Cheatgrass on their property and for assistance with their control efforts. While we do provide landowners with as much information on how to control Cheatgrass on their property as we can, unfortunately, since it is not included on the Washington State Noxious Weed List, we have been forced to tell them that we are unable to provide any assistance with their control efforts. By including Cheatgrass as a Class C Noxious Weed on the Washington State Noxious Weed List, it would allow county weed boards to develop and provide educational materials to the landowners that they serve, and would provide weed boards (as well as other local, state, and federal land managers) leverage when applying for grants and other funding sources to assist landowners in their Cheatgrass control efforts.

I would also like to remind everyone that the Washington State Weed Conference is coming up Wednesday, November 1 through Friday, November 3, at the Wenatchee Convention Center. You can go online at www.weedconference.org to look at the speakers lined up and the topics covered, and also to register for the conference.