FC Noxious Weed Control

Best Management Practices

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Rush skeletonweed

Chondrilla juncea

Family: Asteraceae

Class B Noxious Weed

Control & Containment

Background Information

Rush skeletonweed is a highly competitive and aggressive noxious weed that is found in most parts of Franklin County. It was first reported in the United States near Spokane, WA in 1938. It is a deep-rooted, perennial forb in the sunflower family that poses a serious threat to wheat farming since it spreads from un-developed areas into crop fields. This weed thrives in sandy textured or rocky soils, along roadsides, in rangeland, pastures, CRP, and grain fields. Seedlings can emerge over an extended period of time. Plants may grow to 4 feet with a tap root extending to a depth of 7 feet. Yellow flowers appear in early summer and can continue until frost. Each seed has a parachute of fine hairs which allow it to travel long distances by wind. Rosettes die as the plant ages and branched stems become leafless as the plant bolts and flowers. These defense mechanisms protect the plant from herbicide, cultural or mechanical control methods.

Impacts

Rush skeletonweed is a serious problem in cropping systems, threatening irrigated lands, dryland wheat and rangeland. It reduces crop yield by aggressively out-competing for nutrients and soil moisture. This weed can foul up harvesting machinery and contaminate the wheat crop. Rush skeletonweed displaces native and preferred forage species grazed by livestock and wildlife. Forage production is reduced when the plant successfully outcompetes beneficial species for limited resources. Often the cost of herbicide control is prohibitive due to low productivity of the land. Its multitude of defense mechanisms makes control by any method challenging.

Rush skeletonweed can grow into a colony of plants.

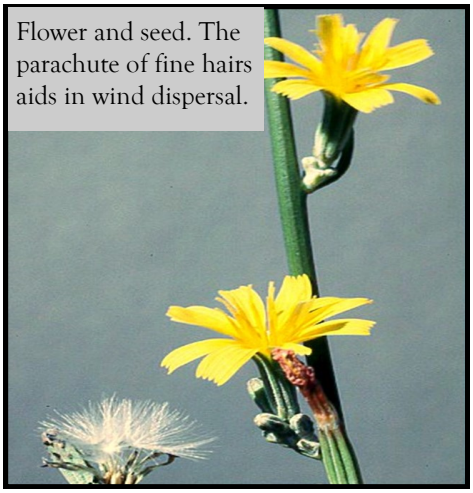
Key Identifying Traits

- Rosettes resemble a dandelion.
- Stem bases have coarse, downward pointing hairs. Stems are highly branched with few leaves.
- Lobed basal leaves point back towards the leaf base.
- Leaves on branched stems are few, narrow and may have smooth edges.
- Flowers are yellow, 1/2 inch in diameter, single or in clusters.
- Plants exude a latex sap when injured.

Brown, down-turned hairs on stems and dandelion-looking rosettes help with i.d.

Biology and Ecology

- Deep-rooted perennial forb that grows 1-5 feet tall.
- Reproduces by seed, from root buds, and from root fragments in the soil.
- Yellow flowers generally occur from June to frost. Petals are flat with distinct lobes.
- Seeds have a parachute of bristly hairs that aid in wind dispersal.



Flower and seed. The parachute of fine hairs aids in wind dispersal.

Control Measures

Prevention: Preventing the establishment of populations through best management practices is the most cost effective method of control. Detect and eradicate new plants early. Perform surveys to locate new infestations. Discontinue soil disturbance activities that can spread seed or allow regrowth.

Biological: Biological controls are available: a mite, a midge, and a rust. They can help reduce seed production but will not eradicate an infestation.

Cultural: Healthy competitive vegetation reduces open spaces, lessening the chance for invasion. Revegetate post fire as rush skeletonweed establishes quickly following fire events.

Mechanical: Pulling of plants and mowing is ineffective because of the plants deep roots and ability to regrow from root fragments.

Chemical: The best timing is in the fall when plants are moving reserves down to the root system. Aminopyralid (Milestone), Aminopyralid and Metsulfuron (Chaparral or Opensight) provide soil residual activity for extended control. Established infestations will require repeated applications and follow up. Survey your land as often as possible to determine the extent to which rush skeletonweed has infested or re-infested your ground or property. If you are taking out Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grass fields it is important to know rush skeletonweed should be treated in the fall preceding any field work.

For this and other publications, see our website at fcweedboard.com

Photos: James Parks, WA State NWCB, and Rich Old, XID Services Inc.

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