



# Issue Brief - 2008

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## Noxious Weeds – Tansy Ragwort

### Overview

The Department of Corrections (DOC) takes an active role in battling noxious weeds found on the grounds of its institutions.

When land lays fallow for several years or is heavily grazed, pioneering invasive species quickly move in and dominate the landscape. Tansy ragwort is one of these species. Biological controls are effective, but often need three to five years without disturbance to build up sufficient numbers to bring a tansy population under control.

Noxious weeds can lie dormant in soil for as long as 15 years and they often grow in areas where other vegetation is sparse, such as low-fertility soils, over grazed pastures and disturbed sites.

### Tansy Ragwort

Tansy ragwort, a member of the Asteraceae family, is a poisonous Eurasian weed that can cause livestock losses. It often invades pastures, woodlands and unused ground. It is classified as a noxious weed in Oregon, Idaho and Washington.

All parts of tansy ragwort are poisonous to animals and people. Poisoning often occurs when small plants intermixed with desirable forage are ingested accidentally by cattle and horses while grazing. Young animals are two to three times more susceptible to ragwort poisoning than a mature animal.

### DOC's Control Methods

To control noxious weeds found on DOC property, the Department mows in the fall to remove old flower stocks and other weeds and grasses. This reduces distribution of tansy ragwort seeds by wind and opens up the area for spring application of

herbicides. Inmate crews under DOC staff supervision are responsible for mowing these areas.

Herbicides are generally applied in the spring. This application is done at least annually for several years to deplete the seed bank in the soil. Fields are monitored several months after herbicide application to determine effectiveness of treatments. The spraying is completed by a hired vendor under contract.

All livestock are removed from pastures as the herbicide is applied. Livestock is kept off the property for several weeks to allow the chemical to trans-locate into the plants.

Tansy ragwort seedlings and rosettes are readily killed by certain herbicides. All herbicides are used as directed by the container label. Using the method of chemical control, the tansy ragwort dies slowly after the treatment. It can take up to four to six weeks until it is safe for livestock to return to the area.

### Marion County Weed Control District

During the fall of 2007, DOC consulted with Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Marion County Weed Control District about its options for tansy control in 2008. The recommendation was made to complete the fall mowing cycle to reduce the buildup of vegetative plant matter in preparation for a spring herbicide treatment. At DOC's request, Marion County Weed Control District personnel created a management plan outlining several long-term control options. The recommendations included mowing, herbicide treatment, tillage and limited grazing.

Cool, damp weather during the spring of 2008 slowed the tansy plant growth and delayed the

planned herbicide application of Weedmaster (a combination of 2-4D and Banvil) by the DOC contractor. About 500 acres were treated with herbicide, followed by a cleanup mowing. Another 500 plus acres were tilled and planted in crops, reducing the need for herbicide treatment or additional mowing. The remaining acreage received a spring mowing followed by a later herbicide treatment.

Marion County Weed Control District worked closely with the DOC facility land manager, offering technical advice and monitoring treatments. Although total eradication of tansy may not be feasible, District personnel believe DOC has demonstrated a commitment to reducing the tansy infestation on State lands under its jurisdiction. ■

**The mission of the  
Oregon Department of Corrections  
is to promote public safety by holding  
offenders accountable for their actions  
and reducing the risk of future  
criminal behavior.**



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84-DOC/PA:5/20/08