

# WEED ALERT

## Perennial Pepperweed



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

Ministry of  
Agriculture and Food

### Perennial Pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*)

## Threat to Rangeland and Riparian Areas

#### *Family:*

Mustard

#### *Other Names:*

Tall whitetop

#### *Description:*

White-flowered perennial mustard species spreading by seeds and extensive, deep creeping root system. Native to southeastern Europe and western Asia.

#### *Stems:*

- 1 to 3 feet tall but can reach 6 to 8 feet in wet areas

#### *Leaves:*

- Bright green to gray-green; toothed or entire margins; covered with a waxy layer.
- Lance-shaped lower leaves are long-stalked and up to 12 inches long; upper leaves are reduced in size and are either short-stalked or stalkless.
- Distinctive leaf midveins are white.

#### *Flowers:*

- White flowers (4 petals), less than 1/8 inch wide, are borne in dense, rounded clusters at branch tips.

#### *Seeds:*

- 2 reddish-brown seeds are contained in each tiny rounded and somewhat hairy fruit (silicle).





Waxy leaves with prominent white mid-veins



Typical roadside infestation



New shoots form along the creeping rootstock

### *Concern:*

The first known B.C. infestation was found in the East Kootenay region north of Cranbrook in 1997. Subsequent infestations were found west of Kamloops near Walachin in 1998. Perennial pepperweed has spread rapidly in northern Europe, Mexico and all western U.S. States, except Arizona. It invades cropland, roadsides and idle areas but is a particular threat to riparian areas and rangelands. Much of the U.S. infestation is associated with river systems and wetland areas. The extensive, woody, deep creeping root system makes perennial pepperweed exceptionally difficult to control.

Agricultural producers, range and riparian area managers and the public are requested to be on the lookout for this devastating plant and to take immediate corrective action if the weed is found or suspected.

### *Damage Caused:*

Perennial pepperweed is well adapted to a wide range of conditions from the lower edge of coniferous forests to dry sagebrush and alkaline areas. Once established it forms dense, competitive monocultures. Infestations degrade wildlife habitat, lower the yield and quality of forage on pastures and hayfields and destroy natural biodiversity by interfering with regeneration of native plant species.

### *What can you do?*

**PREVENTION** to reduce the chance of introduction into a clean field or riparian area should receive the highest priority.

- learn to **IDENTIFY** perennial pepperweed or take suspect plants to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to confirm identification.
- **TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION** by grubbing out, using herbicide treatments or cutting to prevent plants from setting seed.
- if flowering has occurred, **CUT AND BAG PLANTS** for burning or deep burial.
- thoroughly **CLEAN** equipment, vehicles and footwear before leaving infested sites.
- **DO NOT** move infested soil.
- **DO NOT HESITATE.**

**“CONTROL** infested patches **IMMEDIATELY.**”