

**WEED-FREE FEED AND STRAW
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
2009
USDA FOREST SERVICE, PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION**

Q. What is required under the new Forest Service regulation?

- A. All hay, hay cubes, straw, grain, and other crop or mulch products brought on to National Forest land in the Pacific Northwest Region must be certified “weed free” using North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) standards, or better, regardless of how they are used (livestock feed, bedding, erosion control, mulch, etc.).

Note: National Forests in the Pacific Northwest Region, primarily in Oregon and Washington, also include small adjacent portions of Idaho (Wallowa-Whitman NF) and California (Rouge River-Siskiyou NF).

Q. Why is it necessary for the Forest Service to require the use of weed-free hay or crop products on all National Forest System lands in these states?

- A. Forage and mulch products sometimes contain seed or reproductive parts from non-native, invasive and noxious weeds. Resulting weed populations degrade the health of native ecosystems. Wildlife habitat, soil and water quality, rangeland, economic values and beauty of the land decline as a result. National Forest lands are among the areas most vulnerable to impacts from weeds and are also, in general, where prevention of infestation is most likely to succeed. A rule requiring the use of certified weed free feed and other crop products is one of the effective tools for minimizing the spread of invasive plants.

Q. What is meant by the term “weed-free feed” or “certified crop products”?

- A. Weed-free hay or crop products have been inspected according to standards used by the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) and member states. Under NAWMA standards, fields are inspected to ensure the absence of seed and reproductive parts from listed invasive weed species. Fields which pass the inspection are state certified and the producer may then officially label the products as a weed-free hay or crop product. In a like sense, state certified weed-free mulch comes from fields that pass inspection and are then state certified and labeled for use in restoration and re-vegetation projects.

Q. Exactly what types hay or crop products are included in the closure order requirement?

- A. The closure order requires use of hay, hay cubes, straw, grain or other crop or mulch products that are certified as weed-free. Commercially processed feed pellets or steamed, rolled grains are also allowed under this order. They are considered weed-free feed and need not be state certified (see additional information about commercially processed feed below).

Q. Where do I get certified hay and straw products in Oregon and Washington?

- A. The State of Oregon Department of Agriculture has established their certification program and growers have participated around the state. More growers will join the program as the demand for product increases. For a list of providers in Oregon, please see: http://oregon.gov/ODA/CID/weed_free_forage.shtml or call (503) 986-4620. In addition, Wallowa County has had a certification program for weed-free hay and crop products that is sanctioned by Oregon and North American Weed Management Association. Please contact the Wallowa County Extension Office at (541) 426-3143.

The Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board, in cooperation with county weed boards, manages the inspection and certification program in Washington. It is referred to as the Washington Wilderness Hay and Mulch (WWHAM) program and is approved by NAWMA. For information and a list of providers in Washington, please see: <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/index.htm> or call (360) 902-2053

Q. Are livestock feeds the only products which are subject to the closure order?

- A. While hay and similar crop products are most often associated with livestock feeding, they are also used as mulch for erosion control, bedding, and other uses. The closure requires that **all** hay, hay cubes, straw, grain or other crop or mulch products, regardless of how they are used, be state certified as weed-free, when used or stored on National Forest System lands.

Q. Why are feed pellets or steamed and rolled grains allowed, while non-certified hay cubes are prohibited?

- A. Feed pellets are made by finely grinding the ingredients, heat treating, and then compressing into pellets. This process kills a very high percentage of viable seed that may be in the source ingredients. Similarly, steaming and rolling grains kills most viable seeds that may be present, including those of invasive, noxious weeds. While commercial processing feed may not in all cases eliminate all weed seed, feed pellets and steamed rolled grains are considered a reasonable option for preventing invasive and noxious weed spread.

Q. Is there such thing as state certified hay cubes?

- A. Yes. Some states, including Colorado, have developed a process and a market for the development of state certified hay cubes. These cubes are made from state certified hay that is traceable back to the field of origin where the inspection occurred. State certified hay cubes are sold in bags which have sewn-in tags, designating the cubes as state certified. If no tag exists on the bag, hay cubes cannot be considered state certified.

Note: Oregon and Washington currently do not have a process for certifying hay cubes.

Q. Does certification of hay or crop products guarantee that no invasive, noxious weeds will be found in the product?

- A. No. Certification is simply the most feasible way to minimize the risk of viable invasive and noxious weed seed being transported within hay or crop products. When fields are inspected, they are inspected for invasive and noxious weeds which presently contain, or could within the next ten days produce, viable seed. Weed leaves and stems may occur in state certified products, but the intent is to minimize the risk of *seed or reproductive parts* transport.

Q. Does the order apply to me if I am simply passing through National Forests or National Grasslands?

- A. No. As long as hay or crop products are not unloaded or otherwise used on National Forest System lands or the Crooked River National Grassland, the order does not apply.

Q. Does the order apply only on National Forests and National Grasslands, or do other public lands in Oregon and Washington have the same requirement?

- A. Currently, there is no requirement for the general public visiting BLM land in Oregon to use only certified weed free feed, but BLM does use certified weed free hay and straw during projects that it

conducts. Only processed feed pellets are permitted in the National Parks in Oregon and Washington. No other feed types are permitted; including rolled or steamed grain, loose hay or hay cubes. Oregon and Washington State Parks do not require certified weed-free feed at their horse camps and trailheads.

Q. Are there penalties for violation of these closure orders, and how will the orders be enforced?

A. Yes, there are penalties for violation under the statutes listed on the closure order. Following the period of adjustment and education, violations of the closure order prohibitions are punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization or imprisonment for not more than 6 months, or both (16 U.S.C. 551 and 18 U.S.C 3559 and 357).

Q. Am I required to buy certified forage or straw from the same state in which the National Forests I intend to visit are located?

A. No. Many adjacent states (Idaho, California, Nevada, Montana, et al.) have acceptable certification programs with similar weed lists and certification standards. Refer to the North American Weed Management Association web site for a full list of participating states: <http://www.nawma.org/>

Products certified in any of these states, *and* bearing the appropriate official labeling or twine, qualify as certified forage or straw products under this closure order. It is important to note that California also has a Weed Free Forage Program that is acceptable under this order, but is not a member of NAWMA. California products that have been inspected, but that do not have appropriate tags, twine, or certificates indicating the certification are not acceptable under this order. No hay or crop products coming from any states without a certification program meeting or exceeding NAWMA standards can be used on National Forest System lands in the PNW Region.

Q. Who conducts the inspections and how is certified forage or straw labeled?

A. Hay or straw is inspected in the field of origin by trained, certified inspectors. Inspectors check the fields of hay and straw growers within ten days prior to harvest. Standing crops found to be free of listed noxious weed seed are then harvested and marked with the legal certification labeling of the state or county. Examples of certification labels include:

Oregon	white tags, purple and yellow twine, transit certificates
Washington	white tags, purple and yellow twine, transit certificates
Idaho	white tags, purple and yellow twine
Montana	red tags, blue and orange twine, blaze orange label on bags
California	colored twine and tags, product certificate, transit certificates
Colorado	blue and orange twine
Wyoming	blaze orange tags, purple and yellow twine

Q. For which weed species are fields and products inspected to achieve certification?

A. The fields are inspected for the presence of seed or reproductive parts of weeds from the NAWMA list, plus any additional weeds identified by the respective state.

Q. Do certified hay or straw products cost more than uncertified products?

A. The cost of certified hay or straw products can be somewhat higher and the price will likely vary with location and availability.

Q. Where do I find more information on certified hay or straw products?

A. The following websites and contacts may provide information on weed free forage. Your local feed dealer or State Extension Service office may also be able to provide you with information.

- Oregon Dept. of Agriculture Commodity Inspection Division; (503) 986-4620 or website: <http://oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/WEEDS/weedfreeforageprogram.shtml>
- Wallowa County Extension Service, Enterprise, Oregon at 541-426-3143
- Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board: <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/index.htm> or call 360-902-2053
- California: Call 916-445-6214
- Idaho State Dept. of Agriculture at 208-332-8592 or at website: <http://www.idahoag.us/Categories/PlantsInsects/NoxiousWeeds/nwffs.php>
- Montana Dept. of Agriculture at 406 444-7819 or <http://www.agr.state.mt.us/weedpest/nwsff.asp>
- Nevada Dept. of Agriculture at 775-688-1180 ext. 269 or http://agri.state.nv.us/nwac/PLANT_WeedFreeHay.htm
- Colorado at 303-239-4149 or <http://www.ag.state.co.us/DPI/WeedFreeForage/weedfree.html>

For more information on the national weed-free certification program and standards, please refer to the North American Weed Management Association: at <http://www.nawma.org/> or (970) 887-1228.

Q. How can a producer get their crops state certified or get information about their state's certification program?

A. If your state has a program, the websites and phone numbers above may be used to learn how to become a participant in the program.

Q. What other steps can recreational stock users take to minimize the spread of noxious, invasive weeds?

A. Feeding animals exclusively with commercially processed feed pellets, steamed rolled grains, or certified hay one or more days before your trip will not only help you be sure your stock can eat these products, it will also help prevent transport of weed seed in stock manure. You can also help by making sure your vehicles, trailers, boots, and your animal's coat and feet (both stock and dogs) are cleaned of weed seeds prior to your trip. Finally, keeping vehicles on roads and in designated parking areas also helps minimize the spread of weeds.