

Medusahead

Taeniatherum caput-medusae

Medusahead is an annual, native to the Mediterranean region of Eurasia. It is one of the primary range weeds in the Western United States and in the last decade it has become a serious threat to rangelands in northern and central California. Medusahead is an aggressive competitor, competing with other annual grasses and broadleaf plants that are more nutritionally productive for livestock production. Medusahead has a very low forage nutritional value and in areas where Medusahead is dominant, it can reduce the animal carrying capacity by 75 percent.

Physical Control:

Grazing Management: Intensive grazing during the growing season will reduce the Medusahead populations. In intensive grazing research studies in northern California, Medusahead was reduced from 45 percent of cover to less than 10 percent.

Fire: Burning can help remove Medusaheads dense thatch layer. A slow and hot fire when Medusahead is in the soft dough stage can reduce Medusahead population up to 90 percent.

Mechanical: Tillage will control existing Medusahead infested areas and can be used to break deep thatch layers but it can increase erosion and loose soil moisture. Mowing is not an effective control strategy for Medusahead.

Chemical Control:

Herbicides containing Glyphosate (such as Round up or Rodeo) can be used to control Medusahead. Sprays should be applied in March or April before the new seed crop is produced. Since all vegetation is destroyed with the use of this herbicide, reseeding is recommended.

Application cannot exceed 6 pounds ai/A per application or 8 pound ai/A per year. Check the label of the product you are using. Do not graze or harvest vegetation for at least 14 days after application. (ai/A= active ingredient per acre.)

Long Term Control & Management:

Recognize Medusahead's lifecycle so you can manage accordingly. Drive on established roads and trails to avoid transportation of Medusahead seeds from infested areas. When working non-infested areas, wash vehicles and remove seeds from shoes and clothing. In non-infested areas, pull any plants found and the plants should be burned or tightly bagged prior to disposal. Feed Medusahead-free and weed-free forages to livestock to avoid infestations. Maintain a good vegetative cover to minimize infestation of noxious weeds.