



BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

- 521 S. Division Ave, Suite 216 • Sandpoint, ID 83864
- Phone: (208) 255-5681 ext.6 • Email: chase.youngdahl@bonnercountyid.gov
- Website: <https://www.bonnercountyid.gov/noxious-weeds>

Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl—*Director, Bonner County Noxious Weeds*

In the previous issue, I presented information gathered from a series of herbicide trials on the efficacy of controlling Marestalk. My intent now is to distill the data down and share my conclusions. Full disclosure—this is not a peer reviewed project at this time, it's my own research conducted with knowledge and tips gleaned from scientists and professors on collaborations of similar scope. I will also go over informal, anecdotal information from observations outside of the focal trial.

The centerpiece chemistry in the process was Rejuvra® (indaziflam), applied during different phases of every meteorological season except winter. While every meteorological period seemed to yield some degree of control, by far and away the best is a fall application. The plot that I treated in late October with Rejuvra® combined with HighNoon® barely grew a single stem of Marestalk the next year, while maintaining full protection of desirable perennial grasses. A spring Rejuvra® application keeps an area clean of Marestalk through that growing season, but pretty much returns to square one the following year. Summer applications seem to be more hit and miss, but if you wait until it's bolting, herbicide treatment is not going to be worth the return on investment if Marestalk is the sole target. Anecdotally, based on roadside treatment observations, HighNoon® (aminopyralid + florpyrauxifen-benzyl) seems to do an adequate job within the season treated if the material gets applied before July. As for Milestone® and/or Opensight®, you're wasting your time and money gaining any suitable amount of control on Marestalk, pre or post-emergent, if that's the point of emphasis. The florpyrauxifen-benzyl component of HighNoon® can be isolated as the difference maker (aminopyralid doesn't touch Marestalk).

The nature of an upright summer annual like Marestalk is that it's virtually invisible until it bolts. By then it's too late to do much. You can certainly still manage it, but your rate of return is going to be marginal, in my opinion. If it's July or August, and you feel the necessity to implement late post-emergent action, your best bet is to just cut it. If that's not an option and you need to go the herbicide route—the more knockdown power, the better. Fluroxypyr products (VistaXRT®, Flagstaff®, etc.) can achieve that, as can ester formulations of 2,4-D, such as LV4. Caution needs to be exercised if using 2,4-D esters in the heat due to volatilization risks where the herbicide moves off target in a gaseous form. Obviously, our maximum heat is in July and August, so fluroxypyr is probably the safe bet.

I'm always happy to provide technical support and management advice for landowners, but in terms of county property management, I need to focus efforts on listed noxious weeds as the priority. In times of relatively tight budgets, with several straws in the property tax pool, the Commissioners have maintained a position of sticking with obligations that are required by state statute as the funding priorities. A component of the Idaho Noxious Weed Statute directs counties to carry out the rules prescribed by the



BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

- 521 S. Division Ave, Suite 216 • Sandpoint, ID 83864
- Phone: (208) 255-5681 ext.6 • Email: chase.youngdahl@bonnercountyid.gov
- Website: <https://www.bonnercountyid.gov/noxious-weeds>

Director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, which is IDAPA 02.06.09—Rules Governing Noxious Weeds & Invasive Species. That’s where the Idaho noxious weed list is housed. Remember, ‘noxious’ is a legal term in the context of weeds. “Noxious Weeds” is not interchangeable with “Irritating Weeds”. Marestalk is not a noxious weed. As I’ve described in prior articles, there is a petition process to initiate negotiated rulemaking for presenting a case for a specimen to be added to the Idaho noxious weed list. Having already written about all the ins and outs with that process in the not-too-distant past, I won’t belabor it here. In all honesty, I don’t see Marestalk ever being listed in the Idaho Noxious Weed Rule. In the grand scheme of things, it’s just not a significant enough threat. It’s native to the United States, does not pose a public health nor animal poisoning peril and largely does not damage the environment nor the economy. I kind of put it in the same basket as Mullein. Other than being ugly, the most significant issue with Marestalk is that the seeds can irritate the nostrils of horses. All that said, there is a mechanism in statute that allows counties to adopt their own county noxious weed list into ordinance, which holds the full force and effect of law. That’s an issue that can be taken up with county commissioners as a possible avenue. But...I would temper expectations on that being successful, being that it would come at an additional cost to the county taxpayers, when there’s just barely enough to go around for managing widespread levels of what we’re already responsible for in the state rule (think Spotted Knapweed, Oxeye Daisy, Canada Thistle and Hawkweeds). I don’t mean to be a Debbie Downer on this subject, but I’ve picked up on enough undertones through conversations regarding Marestalk that it has become necessary to tell hard truths and share the big picture political reality. I will certainly do what I can to maintain Marestalk (among other nuisance weeds) at reasonable levels on county owned and managed properties/rights-of-way, but will not go out of my way to build a program around it unless a day ever comes where the county commissioners adopt Marestalk as a local noxious weed into Bonner County ordinance, significantly increase the noxious weed fund and point blank direct an operational shift.

Hopefully this first ever two-part Weed of the Month series was informative. I’ve spent a long time studying and evaluating the issue. I will leave you with a summary graph in lieu of a photo.