



BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

1500 Hwy 2, Suite 101 • Sandpoint, ID 83864 • Phone: (208) 255-5681 ext. 6
<https://www.bonnercountyd.gov/noxious-weeds>

Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl, *Bonner County Noxious Weeds*

The conditions each year unfolds just a bit different from the others. My observations of 2024 thus far have noted a chilly, wet spring and start of summer with a switch flipped at the 4th of July, catapulting us into the 90s with no looking back for several weeks, followed by a mixed bag so far in August. Usually, overall cooler/wetter or hotter/drier growing seasons promote the germination and development of different noxious and invasive weeds. Conditions experienced this growing season seemed to accommodate both—from bumper crops of Red Sorrel and Hairy Vetch early on, to a relatively strong crop of Rush Skeletonweed (among a few others) during the heat. We'd all make a killing if growing noxious & invasive weeds was a business!

I have fielded several queries this year on Equisetum. There are two species; Equisetum arvense and Equisetum laevigatum—commonly known as Field Horsetail and Scouringrush, respectively. They are primitive plants, native to the entire contiguous United States, with spore-producing cones as part of the reproductive system. Field Horsetail grows 1'-2' tall with leafless, fleshy branches in a whorled structure around the main stem. They kind of remind you of miniature pine trees. The Scouringrush variety (sometimes called Snakegrass) has branchless stems that are jointed and hollow, with distinguishable bands at each node. Distinctly different species, visually, but two sides of the same coin. Equisetum has always been around, but this seemed to be a heavy year for it. My speculation is that the damp conditions earlier in the growing season was conducive to spore germination. Once established, it develops a network of tuber-bearing roots, which also contribute to propagation. Being native, Equisetum is not considered problematic in natural areas, however, that can change when it enters human controlled areas, i.e. – cropland, pastures and landscapes. Equisetum contains alkaloids, a compound that's toxic to livestock, primarily horses. It also contains high amounts of silica (primarily the Scouringrush variety) that can cause premature wearing of teeth. These plants were actually used historically for scrubbing and cleaning.

For control with herbicide, there are few options labeled for Equisetum species. For range & pasture use sites, TelarXP® (chlorsulfuron) is the ticket. For turf & landscaped use sites, Sedgehammer® (halosulfuron) is about the only chemistry that I've been able to come up with. There are ester formulated 2,4-D's with Field Horsetail on the label (several trade names marked



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as “2,4-D LV6, usually) for use in certain agricultural crops. Cultural control is an option, especially in grass hay. Equisetum responds minimally to nitrogen, so a fertilizer application first thing in the spring should give the grasses enough of a competitive advantage to overtake the Equisetum, especially the Field Horsetail variety.

Summer is almost over, and yes, I’m sad. :-(There is hunting and football season to look forward to, speaking for myself. Hopefully there are things you can look forward to with the changing of the season as well.

Go Seahawks!