



BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

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

Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl, *Bonner County Weeds Manager*

What exactly is a weed? Spoiler alert, it has nothing to do with what they sell in Washington for psychoactive effects. :-) A weed is any plant, native or non-native that interferes with your land management objectives. Could be dandelions in your lawn, could be cattails on the shores of your pond, it could be Pine saplings populating a fallowed portion of a hay field that you're ready to convert back to productivity. These are just a few examples of many. Is a weed different from a noxious weed? Yes! A noxious weed is a non-native plant, introduced through human actions that create major issues across the native landscape. The issues can include toxicity to livestock, destruction to agricultural crops, as well as the choking out of indigenous plants and displacement of wildlife. The biggest distinction is that a noxious weed needs to be designated as such by law. There are currently 67 weeds that the Idaho legislature has declared 'noxious weeds'. The noxious weed law is subject to change any given year, and the list may be added to or subtracted from. I'm not aware of any proposed changes in the upcoming legislative cycle, but will continue to monitor it. In addition, county and municipal ordinances may be put in place on weeds that are not state listed but still create issues, locally. The objective here was to just give succinct definitions and related examples, however I'd be happy to discuss the topic in further detail if you wish. Phone call or email works for me.

Weed of the Month is one of those 67 Idaho noxious weeds; **Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*)**. Being a biennial, it germinates and creates a rosette of basal leaves the first year; then bolts, flowers, sets seed and dies in the second year. The leaves are shaped like the tongue of a hound, and the flowers are reddish-purple before developing Velcro-like seeds. At maturity, the seeds break away and cling to everything. Everything...and then some! The bristles on the seeds are actually shaped like miniature hooks—they latch on to animal fur, clothing, shoe laces and vehicles (including felt-lined inner fender wells on some newer model pickup trucks & SUV's). Since Houndstongue is a biennial, it cannot spread from roots or other vegetative parts, only seeds. But these seeds are built to spread, so it's important to not let an infestation reach maturity.



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Houndstongue contains alkaloids, making it poisonous to horses and cattle; consumption of enough causes liver failure. The most likely scenario for poisoning occurs from consuming contaminated hay, as live plants have a scent that discourages grazing. Even if they leave it alone as far as grazing, the seeds may become embedded in their eyelids causing extreme discomfort at best, permanent vision issues at worst. It is primarily found in pastures and forest margins, but may also be found in rights-of-way or other disturbed sites.

If caught early, mechanical control is effective. First year rosettes can be hand pulled, and second year plants can be mowed prior to flowering. Additionally, the rosettes will not withstand regular cultivation. The objective with annuals and biennials is to prevent them from dispersing seed. With larger infestations, chemical control is the most effective and feasible. A combination of aminopyralid (Milestone®), metsulfuron (Escort®, MSM60, etc.) and 2,4-D amine with a surfactant is the ticket for a two-pronged approach of postemergent and preemergent control. If you have a brand new infestation that has yet to create a seedbank, you can go without the aminopyralid in the above combination. Other herbicides are labeled for use on Houndstongue as well. A root mining weevil is abundant in Canada and has shown significant Houndstongue stand reduction. This biological control agent did not pass muster with APHIS for use in the United States due to damage it causes on a native in the same family as Houndstongue. The weevil has already migrated on its own from British Columbia into Idaho, so efforts are being put forth by university bio-control specialists to gain approval for intrastate transport since the native borage suffering collateral damage only exists in Texas. Noxious weed control professionals are following the progress, as this weevil would be a tremendously helpful biological control option for managing Houndstongue throughout the state, including Bonner County. Fingers crossed! Feel free to reach out anytime for updates or information.