



Notes from the Field — May 2017

Do I Want That Plant Growing There? Invasive Weeds 101

The growing season fast approaches and with signs of life in the fields and in your backyard, be sure to keep an eye out for some of the nasty noxious and prohibited noxious weeds. If you find any of these plants, please forward pictures to your local District Office and Agricultural Fieldman for further inspection.

Looking for more information? Be sure to visit Alberta Invasive Species Council's website and their popular fact sheets! There are some great plant biology descriptions as well as specific control options and prevention methods for many of Alberta's invasive weeds and pests!

Fact Sheets & More Resources:

- [Noxious Weeds](#)
- [Prohibited Weeds](#)
- [Alberta Invasive Weeds Fact Sheet](#)

Wild Rhubarb or Noxious Burdock? How to Tell The Difference

Grasslands in the Special Areas are home to plant species which are not only delicious to livestock and wildlife, but provide tasty treats for people too. Raspberries and buffalo berries are two examples, but beware, there are some noxious weeds that can be mistaken for edible delights.

Rhubarb is a Eurasian perennial plant not native to North America but its leaves look very similar to the rosette leaves of burdock—a noxious biennial weed. So unless rhubarb escaped from a garden, you are not likely to find it growing wild in the Special Areas.



Left: A burdock plant growing in Special Areas. The first year of growth this plant will not exhibit flowers and look very similar to rhubarb. Right: A perennial rhubarb plant,

If you do see a species looking similar to rhubarb, you should call your local Ag Fieldman as it could be **burdock**. In the second year of its biennial life cycle, burdock will grow flowers on tall, erect, coarse stems. The seeds are shed through distinct burs that act like Velcro. Infestations are often found because landowners notice these sticky burs on livestock, pets and wildlife. The nature

of these burs allow this noxious weed to be spread across long distances when animals carrying the burs rub them off on trees, rocks or fences.

Wondering how to tell these plants apart? You can distinguish between rhubarb and burdock by looking at the edges and underside of their large leaves. Burdock leaves will have hairy undersides, where rhubarb will be smooth. The margins of rhubarb leaves are also more curly or wrinkly than burdock leaves. If you cut the stem open, a burdock plant will be hollow, while rhubarb will be solid, making it such a great pie filling.

Burdock is usually one of the earliest noxious weeds to emerge in the Special Areas so be sure to scout early in the spring. If you find burdock, pick the burs (wear gloves), bag them and burn them. For plants still in rosette stage, you can apply broadleaf herbicides, such as 2,4-D, to prevent seed set.



Left: A mature burdock plant in its second year of life, showing flowers and burs. Inset: A close up look at the burdock burs.

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Have You Seen This Menace? *Noxious Downy Brome*

AKA: *Cheatgrass, downy chess, downy bromegrass, cheat*

Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum L.*) is a tufting annual noxious grass you should be on the lookout for first thing in April and early May. It usually germinates in the fall and develops an extensive shallow root system which competes heavily for early season moisture. **Downy Brome** is often confused with wild oats, fall rye and other brome species, making in-field identification difficult.

Downy Brome prefers light textured, sandy soils and dry grasslands, often found throughout the Special Areas. While it may be palatable early in the season, it is very unpalatable after seed head emergence and the awns can cause mouth and eye infections in livestock. In overgrazing or disturbed ground situations, this weed can become very aggressive, outcompeting desirable species.



For hay or rangeland, the options are more limited. Mowing at early growth stages, prior to seed set can be helpful, but multiple flushes and different growth stages may lead to spreading seeds. Grazing early in the spring while palatable may help, but can suppress desirable forage and even lead to increased **Downy Brome** populations in some situations. Cultivation followed by fertilizing and seeding desirable species which outcompete the brome is also an option. Tillage can be used to germinate the existing **Downy Brome** within the seed bed, but must be used carefully to prevent soil erosion.



A combination of control methods repeated throughout the growing season, for successive years, is the best chance of success.

If you spot this noxious weed contact your Ag Fieldman to determine the best course of action for your situation. Mature **Downy Brome** populations represent an extreme fire risk hazard in dry conditions, and have a negative impact on the overall productivity of your fields.

IDENTIFICATION

Seedling identification is very difficult for **Downy Brome**, but early detection is imperative for effective and economical control. Stems are slightly hairy, with bright green, hairy leaves 14-16 cm long and 2-4 mm wide. Leaf blades spiral in a clock wise direction. Ligules are about 2 mm with a prominent membrane. Auricles are absent. Sheathes are closed to near the top and finely hairy. At maturity, the whole plant turns from green to purple, with 1-20 tillers ranging in height from 10-70 cm. The inflorescence droops to the side, with 5-8 awned florets. A population of downy brome will look almost fuzzy at maturity.

CONTROL OPTIONS

Control strategies for **Downy Brome** vary based on the ecosystem it is found in. In spring seeded crops there are several chemical options available, including pre-seed glyphosate, pre-emergent trifluralin, and in-crop pyroxsulam. See labels prior to application, and discuss with your Ag Fieldman.

A heavy infestation can produce as much as 400 lbs or 80 million seeds/ac.

A **Downy Brome** density of 50 plants/ft² can remove soil water to the *permanent wilting point*

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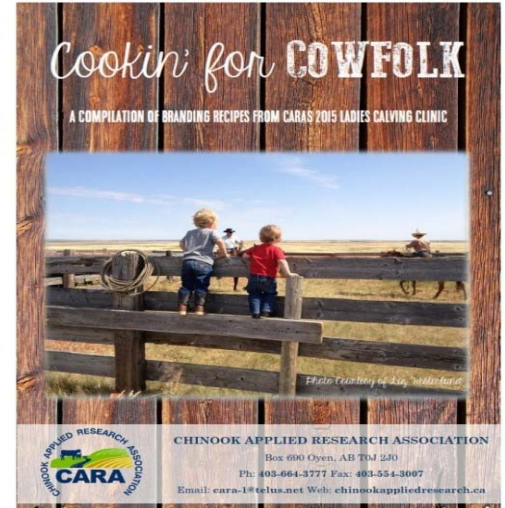
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Cookin' for Cowfolk?

Need ideas for how to keep your Branding Crew from getting a case of the hangries?

Check out the CARA Cookbook, a compilation of recipes from Special Areas ranchers and farmers!

Recipes from CARA's 2015 Ladies Calving Clinic, [here!](#)



Canadian Beef Industry Conference
August 15-17, 2017—Calgary, AB

"Sharing Common Ground"

**REGISTRATION
OPEN NOW**

The 2nd Annual Canadian Beef Industry Conference
"Sharing Common Ground"
August 15-17 2017 at the BMO Conference Centre in Calgary, Alberta



WESTERN CANADA
Conference on Soil Health & Grazing

Western Canada Conference on
Soil Health & Grazing

**PROFIT ABOVE
WEALTH BELOW**

Edmonton, AB
December 5 - 7, 2017

**Western Canada
Conference on Soil Health & Grazing**
December 5-7, 2017—Edm., AB

"Profit Above—Wealth Below"

Reminder!

2% Liquid Strychnine is still available for Richardson's Ground Squirrel control at the Hanna, Consort and Oyen District Offices during regular office hours.

Pesticide Container Recycling

Pesticide Return Programs

Where to drop off your Pesticide Containers?

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Upcoming Ag Events in the Special Areas

Farmers' Market
Round Up Centre
400 Pioneer Trail

First farmers market is May 10th.
Continues every Wednesday from
12:00pm to 5:30pm

14th ANNUAL Southern Alberta Grazing School For Women

Registration Deadline: July 18th
Cost: \$100.00

REGISTER BY JUNE 16TH FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A PRIZE!

JULY 25th-26th 2017

**MUNSON COMMUNITY HALL
STARLAND COUNTY, AB**

To Register Contact:
Kristi Stebanuk
Ph: 403-382-0927
email: kstebanuk@cowandfish.org
Link to Register: <https://2017SAGSW.eventbrite.com>
Blogspot: southernalbertagrazingschool.blogspot.ca

TOPICS INCLUDE

- Range & Riparian Health
- Local Plant Identification
- Floating Islands
- Pasture Weeds
- Post Calving Care & Bovine TB
- Tour Starland County in an AC Bus
- Evening Social Opportunity to the Historic Last Chance Saloon in Wayne**

Grazing Schools for Women

Your Agriculture Fieldmen

JESSE WILLIAMS

DON HOGAN

JUSTINE SIMPSON



SA2

(403) 854-5625/(403) 854-1114



SA3

(403) 664-3618/(403) 664-5585



SA4

(403) 577-3523/(403) 575-5525

We offer support for programs including:

- ◆ Plant identification & noxious weed control
- ◆ Grazing management & strategies
- ◆ Pest management & controls
- ◆ Growing Forward 2
- ◆ Environmental Farm Plans
- ◆ Shelterbelt programs & planning
- ◆ Animal predation concerns
- ◆ Equipment rentals including RFID tag readers & pest traps
- ◆ Concerns related to *Soil Conservation Act*, *Weed Control Act*, *Agricultural Pest Act*, *Animal Health Act*, and other legislation.

Special Area No. 2

Hanna District Office
(403) 854-5600

Special Area No. 3

Oyen District Office
(403) 664-3618

Special Area No. 4

Consort District Office
(403) 575-3523