

Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign

Idahoans Pulling Together Against Invasive Weeds

News Release

State Asks For Idahoan's Help In Battling Rush Skeletonweed Noxious Weed Infestations

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Idaho noxious weed experts have placed Rush skeletonweed near the top of their list of priority weeds to eradicate and are asking Idahoans for their help in attacking this highly invasive weed that has infested more than a million acres of Idaho's land.

"Idaho has been fighting a battle against this aggressive weed for decades now and has barely been able to slow down its spread. Weed superintendents and other experts in the field are hoping that citizens will pitch in to attack this noxious invader," said Roger Batt, Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign coordinator.

Rush skeletonweed is a perennial whose branched stems may be 4 feet tall and appear leafless. The lower 4 to 6 inches of the stems are covered with coarse red-brown hairs. The dandelion-like rosettes, which form in the fall, die as the plant ages. When the plant is cut or broken, it oozes a milky white latex sap. It has yellow, flowering heads that are found scattered on the branches. The small yellow flowers begin in early summer and continue until frost in the fall. Each seed has a parachute of fine hairs (resembling a small dandelion seed) which allow it to occasionally travel up to 30 miles in the wind.

Rush skeletonweed thrives in well-drained, sandy textured or rocky soils, along roadsides, in rangelands, pastures and in remote areas of the state. It forms dense stands that crowd out desirable vegetation forcing wildlife and other grazing animals to move to other areas.

"Rush skeletonweed is a very difficult noxious weed to eradicate. Weed experts warn that hand pulling Rush skeletonweed actually activates the roots below the ground which causes the plant to rapidly grow and multiply. Although biological control is available for this plant it is not as effective as using the proper herbicide for chemical control. Herbicides such as Milestone, Perspective®, Tordon 22K, or Transline are available for use on this invasive plant," Batt explained. "It is best to use an herbicide on this plant while it is in the rosette stage." When using an herbicide always follow the label and safety instruction on that label."

Once the plant has bolted, the basal rosettes recede, thus giving very little leaf surface to allow the pesticide to get into the plant. Hand harvesting the plants (if there are just a few of them) in the late summer will keep the seeds from spreading, then in early fall treating the plants with an herbicide is the most effective method of control.

Rush skeletonweed is one of Idaho's 66 listed noxious weeds that have infested 8-million acres of Idaho's lands and pose a serious threat to Idaho's economy, ecology and agriculture, causing an estimated \$300 million annually in direct damages. State and private landowners spend upwards of \$30 million a year to combat noxious weeds. Still, thousands of acres of Idaho's private and public lands are taken over every day by noxious weeds such as Rush skeletonweed.

For more information, visit the Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign's website: www.idahoweedawareness.com. Residents can also contact their County Weed Superintendent or a private applicator for technical assistance in dealing with Rush skeletonweed or other noxious weeds.

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