

## **Invasive Species Factsheet-Medusahead Wildrye**

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**Species Common Name:** Medusahead Wildrye, Medusahead

**Species Scientific Name:** *Taeniatherum caput-medusae*

**Native Range and Introduction:** This species is native to the Mediterranean regions and was introduced into the United States around 1880 as a seed contaminant. It is likely still moved as a contaminant in seed, other factors such as humans and animals probably also play a large role.

**Description:** This is a winter annual grass species that grows up to about two feet tall. The entire plant is covered in small hairs, while the plant has longer hairs along the collar of the leaf. The plant has a band at the node that is green, but darkens at maturity. The ligule is membranous and squared off at the end. The inflorescence is a spike with long awns coming off the seed heads. The awns are long (1-4 inches), twisted and stiff. The flowering head is almost as wide as it is long. This plant is high in silica content making it a very low quality forage. This species uses the excess thatch produced to smother out other species, forming dense large monocultures.

**Ecological and Economic Impacts:** Ecologically this species can be devastating to an area, as it chokes out other vegetation with its thick thatch layer, leading to large stands of nothing but this species which can cause negative effects on wildlife species such as the sage grouse. This also changes the fire regime as its layer of thatch can be easily ignited and burn quickly, leading to a higher frequency of fires. Economically this species can reduce grazing capabilities by 50-80%, it can also cause injury to livestock with its long awns, and will lead to more inputs in fire suppression.

**Regulated Status in Wyoming:** Medusahead is on Sheridan County Declared Noxious Species List and is also on the North American Invasive Species Management Association Weed Free Forage Noxious Species List that Wyoming uses for weed free forage standards.

**Distribution in Wyoming:** Medusahead is currently only found in Sheridan County (2016).

### **Control Options:**

**Mechanical:** Control is feasible if continued throughout the growing season for multiple years. Hand pulling small infestation or multiple mowing or disking may be effective options. These mechanical techniques are needed to remove the thatch this species produces once established.

**Chemical:** In a rangeland situation, Plateau (Imazapic) could be applied in the fall, otherwise a grass herbicide could be used in a ROW or Industrial situation.

**Cultural:** Healthy stands of perennial grass, will help prevent introductions from becoming established. Deferring heavy early season grazing can help prevent this species from becoming established.

**Biological:** The plant can be grazed, but it is a short window in the spring. A bioherbicide is in the early stages of development, this product attacks plant roots and leading to small plants with less viable seed.

**Integrated Weed Management:** This would likely combine a spring application mechanical treatment and a follow up fall herbicide treatment. Could reseed the area the follow year to increase competition.

### **Online Resources:**

URL: <http://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/117419/aqb>

URL: <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/medusahead.shtml>

URL: <http://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=6507>

Image 1 URL: <https://www.invasive.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=1459335>

Image 2 URL: <https://www.invasive.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=1459332>



Image 1-Seedheads with long awns



Image 2-Infestation

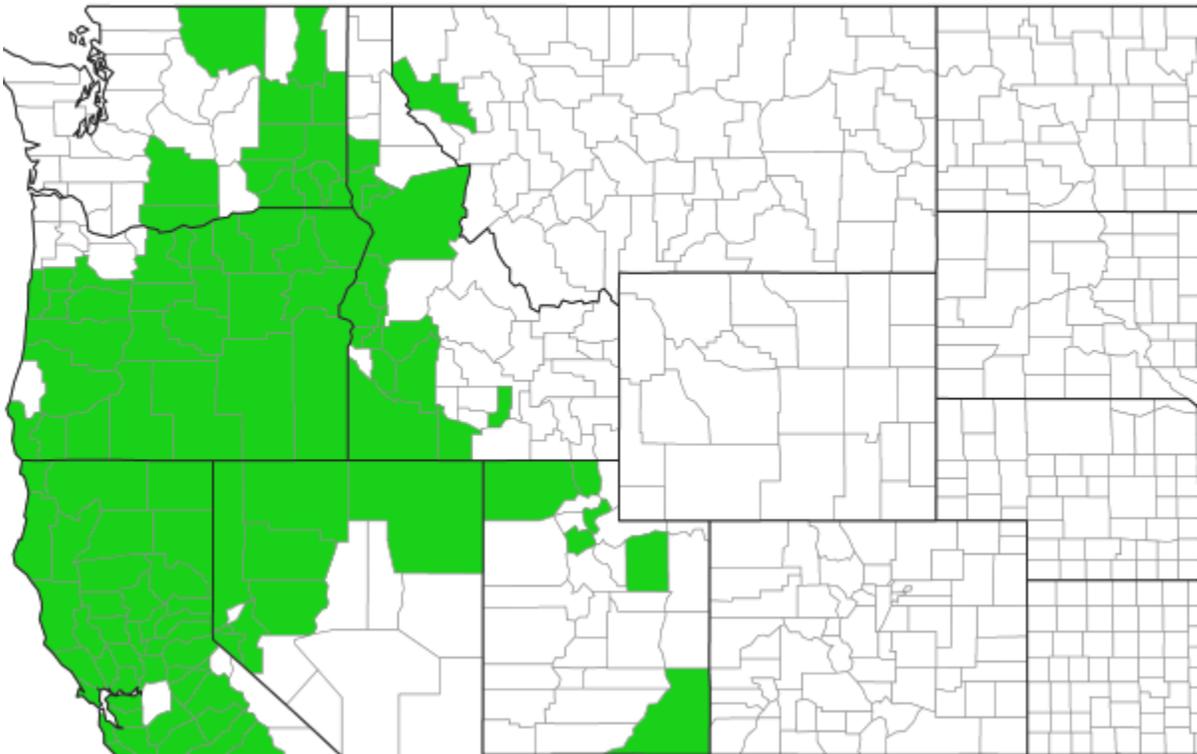


Figure 1-Medusahead distribution surrounding Wyoming (Sheridan County is not shown on this map)

URL: <http://www.eddmaps.org/distribution/uscounty.cfm?sub=6507>