



Ada County



September
2011

Pest of the Month

**A quick guide to identifying and controlling
invasive plants and animals found in the county**

BLACK HENBANE

Black henbane is an annual or biannual plant that grows up to 3 feet tall. The entire plant is covered with greasy hairs. Leaves are up to 8 inches long and 6 inches wide, shallowly lobed and heavy scented. Flowers borne on spikes form the leaf axils from May until September. They are showy, 5 lobed, up to 2 inches across, and greenish-yellow in color with deep purple veins and throats. The calyx forms a 1-inch, urn-shaped "fruit" that has a thickened lid that pops off at maturity and spills the black seeds. Black henbane is a Mediterranean native that was introduced as an ornamental and medicinal plant in the 17th century. It spreads by seeds and is found in a variety of environmental conditions. Black henbane is a narcotic and poisonous to humans. Livestock avoid it unless other forage is not available. Two alkaloids in black henbane tissues (hyoscyamine and scopolamine) are useful sedative/ anti-spasmodic drugs when used under controlled conditions.



Quick Facts



Common effects of henbane ingestion in humans include hallucinations, dilated pupils, restlessness, and flushed skin. Less common symptoms such as convulsions, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, and hypertension have also been noted. Livestock will usually avoid it because of its foul odor and bitter taste. If eaten in large amounts death can result. In the Middle Ages, black henbane was widely used in Germany to augment the inebriating qualities of beer.

How To Control

Prevention: The most effective method of black henbane management is preventing its spread and establishment. Limiting weed seed dispersal, containing current infestations, minimizing soil disturbances, detecting and eradicating new plants, maintaining competitive desirable plants, and grazing properly will help reduce the establishment and spread of black henbane. Report black henbane locations to the landowner, manager or weed district. Remove all weed seeds from your clothing, equipment and vehicle before moving out of an infested area. Learn to identify the plants and beware of fill dirt, forage and contaminated crop seed from outside your area. Always sow certified weed-free seeds.

See other control methods on other side...

How to Control

Mechanical:

Cultivation prior to seed production may be used to control black henbane. Cultivation must be repeated annually until the seed bank is depleted.

Pulling or digging isolated plants or small infestations prior to seed production can be an effective means of controlling this plant if the entire taproot is removed. If pulling, gloves and protective clothing are strongly recommended to prevent skin irritation. Because of its thick, tough stem and roots, black henbane can be difficult to hand-pull. Pulling when the soil is moist increases the likelihood of removing the entire root.

If initial pulling or digging does not kill the plant, the method must be repeated throughout the season to ensure no seeds are produced. Pulling and digging may have to be repeated over several years to control plants emerging from the seed bank. Care should be taken with mature plants to avoid spreading seed, and the plants must be disposed of properly. Plants with mature fruits should be carefully placed and sealed in bags to prevent seed dispersal, disposed through the trash or burned, and the area should be monitored for new seedling emergence for at least five years.

Burning: Black henbane with mature fruits can be burned to kill seed and reduce seed spread.

Mowing: Repeated mowing prior to seed production can be effective control.

Chemical:

Herbicide recommendations vary by region and site. Read and follow the herbicide label to determine whether the herbicide applies to your situation, what rates are appropriate, and ensure all safety recommendations are followed. Herbicides should be applied with a non-ionic surfactant at the rosette stage and prior to flowering to prevent seed production. The area should be monitored after application and any escapes or regrowth should be retreated.

Source: Montana State University . www.msuextension.org

Note: Chemical control of any weed can be difficult and confusing. If you are not experienced in chemical control or do not understand the product label, you should consult a licensed applicator to assist you. Inappropriate application can kill desirable vegetation, and may violate federal law.



For questions or concerns, please contact :

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