

We invite noxious weed article submissions from our young readers. Our first contributor is 13 year old Adrian Thomson from Randolph, Utah.

## **Noxious Weed Prevention**

By Adrian Thomson

Have you ever wondered why those little burrs called Houndstongue stick to your clothes just as you get out of the truck to go hiking and when you are further into the mountains you don't see as many? They are noxious weeds. They stick to clothing to go from place to place to spread the species everywhere. Houndstongue plants are found along the roadsides because of soil disturbance which allows for the weeds to get established, so the further from the road less plants are found. Other weeds spread pollen through the air to travel long distances. Others expel their seeds from a capsule which soar several feet from the main plant. Vehicles are another way weeds travel. Diffuse Knapweed acts as tumbleweed and gets entangled in the vehicles frame when run over. This paper is about different kinds of noxious weeds and how I'll spread the word about them.

Noxious weeds are harmful plants that usually come from different parts of Asia to North America either accidentally, purposefully, or just because they look unique. Even though they look pretty or were thought to be beneficial at one time, they wipe out entire fields by stealing nutrients from other plants growing around them, drive woodland creatures off their once fertile habitat to look for native species, and make domesticated animals sick or sometimes even kill them. You see, noxious weeds can become a real problem if they are not controlled. Many people are affected by noxious weeds; ranchers whose cattle can die from noxious weeds or have poor nutrition from eating the weeds are concerned as well as farmers whose crops are decreased by the weed invasion. Persons who enjoy observing/hunting wildlife are concerned as well. Noxious weeds invade and take over native plants that wildlife thrives on.

When noxious weeds need to be controlled there are several methods to use. One method is herbicides, or chemical control. The best time to spray the herbicide is before the plant matures and produces seeds. Herbicides need to be handled and used with extreme caution. Biological control is a method that uses insects. The insects usually destroy the weed. One way they destroy the weeds is by laying eggs inside the plant stem, seed head, or roots where the larvae eat the inside of the plant after they hatch. Insects also irritate the plant to the point that it breaks out in galls. A gall is a type of defense that the plant uses. Another method is mechanical, which means to actually remove and destroy the weeds. Some ways of doing this are; disking, cutting or mowing. This is usually done when the weeds are widespread and take up a large area.

The first step on the path to control noxious weeds is education. If you identify Houndstongue or other noxious weeds you can be a contributor to weed control. Something as simple as pulling a familiar noxious weed out of the ground can contribute to the need of protecting our natural resources. Become familiar with the different types

of noxious weeds in your area so you can recognize and prevent them from spreading. These areas can even be your backyard, fields and open spaces in towns and cities. Contact your local agencies (County Extension, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, etc.) for noxious weed prevention, the internet or the CWMA (Cooperative Weed Management Area) to find out what different kinds of noxious weeds look like. By getting more people who enjoy, recreate or manage their land to get involved with weed identification, a balanced ecosystem can be obtained.

All in all, noxious weeds will always be a problem, but with continued efforts of dedicated individuals and agencies, we can keep them at bay. The noxious weeds I am familiar with are: Houndstongue, Dyers woad, Henbane, White top (Pepperweed), and Diffuse knapweed. Sometimes you can gather Dyers woad for a fee, paid by the county. So the next time you come across a noxious weed, pull it out and dispose of it properly.