

Scotch thistle is marching its' way across the panhandle and is leaving a path of destruction in its wake.

Scotch thistle is a biennial plant, growing up to 7 feet tall. Each plant produces more seeds than a 7-11 big swig cup can hold. A plant that tall needs a solid base so Scotch's' base can cover a four foot circle. Imagine how much grass that base can choke out! The leaves and stock are covered with thorns. Cattle and horses refuse to even walk through dense stands let alone put their tender noses close to the plant.

Scotch thistle is a declared noxious weed in several panhandle counties including Dawes, Sheridan, Morrill and Banner. It is present in all eleven counties. The infestation level in pastures and waste areas range from single plants to acres of dense stands.

There are several control measures effective for Scotch thistle. The plants that will seed next year are lurking in the grass or trash from this years' thistle crop. Digging these rosettes to a depth of six inches will eliminate the plants will eliminate them for good! You have too many to dig? Several herbicides are labeled for controlling Scotch. Fall is a great time to spray them. A spring follow up inspection of the property is necessary to find and control any missed plants. Mowing the plants next summer will reduce seed production but the thick woody stalks will probably damage the mower.

Invasive weed control is most effective when all the neighbors are working together to control the marching invaders. So visit with them about a team effort to prevent the introduction of this invading army or to kick them out of your neighborhood. This plant can and will take control of your land if you don't take a stand and fight for good grass and fat cattle or horses.

Your local Weed Superintendent will gladly assist you in developing an effective control plan to assist in regaining your most valuable commodity, healthy, productive grasslands.

Do yourself a favor and control that first plant. For those properties already infested with Scotch thistle, consider the cost of lost grass production and start a control program today!