

## ***Beat a Cheater***



Nobody likes a cheater! The feelings of betrayal, heartache, and even revenge may drive us to seek retaliation for the “scoundrel”. Bring out the cameras, tracking devices, and start monitoring credit card statements! There are many devices to assist us in beating those rats. But what if the “cheater” happens to be an invasive winter annual weed? Don’t let this nefarious character cheat you out of your sustainability bliss! **Cheatgrass or Downy brome (*Bromus tectorum*)** is an aggressive grass species from Asia and is one

of the most problematic weeds in the west! Due to the lifecycle of *cheatgrass*, it robs (cheats) native plants of resources (sun, and space, and most importantly- water) necessary for their survival and cheats land owners/managers out of needed forage for domestic grazers and wildlife alike. Cheatgrass germinates in late summer or early fall (except in drought conditions). The plants grow rapidly with growth continuing throughout the winter in the roots of the plants. When warmer temperatures and precipitation arrive in the spring, the plants are already established to continue with flowering, setting seed, and ultimately dying. Seed production takes place during the spring when plenty of moisture is usually available while native plants don’t complete this stage until later in the season when moisture is less available (or absent) and new seedlings may struggle to survive.

Once established, productivity of the land decreases as the plants continue to occupy more area each year altering native landscapes and increasing the potential for fires. The forage value is low due to the narrow time frame that it may be grazed by livestock or wildlife. Once seed heads emerge, grazing is reduced to zero due to the dangerous awns on the seeds. In addition, stands of this invader may have several growth stages from newly germinated seedlings, to those that may already heading out reducing the likelihood that domestic animals may graze the species. Cheatgrass seeds can cause problems for animals when those seeds get lodged in the mouths and/or digestive tracts of grazing animals as well as various medical problems for dogs when they get into the animal's nose, ears or between toes.

And then there’s the human factor. Trekking across any lands infested with this species is sure to spread the weed even farther as any seeds that haven’t yet fractured (fallen) out are sure to get imbedded in shoes, clothing, equipment, and the fur of any animal accompanying you.



So what’s the best strategy for managing this cheater? An integrated approach is necessary. Key components are reducing seed production thru mechanical means such as continued pulling, mowing or tillage combined with proper grazing practices that protect desirable native grasses\*, limiting disturbances, use of specific herbicides at the correct time, and generally managing for desirable species! Seeds remain viable up to 5+ years so breaking that cycle is

critical in controlling this species. If applying herbicides over large tracts of grazing land, unless you are willing to alter your grazing practices, you will only get cheat grass back in those areas! There are several herbicides available for controlling cheatgrass depending on your situation or areas of infestations. Here are a few common ones. Highlighted products have the longest control but are the costliest.

### Pre-Emergent (applied before germination)

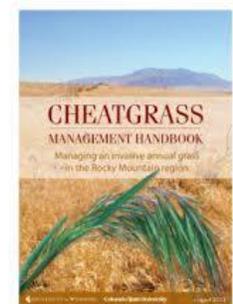
- **Plateau**® and generics (Imazipic) 4-8 oz./acre. Range and pasture applications. Timing critical – application must be done *before* germination in late summer/early fall. No adjuvant needed. Moisture required to move into germination zone. Good-excellent results. May use as early post emergent with addition of adjuvant with Mixed results. May suppress other desirable brome grasses.
- **Prodiamine**-many generics 1-2.5#/ acre. Timing before germination, late August, early September. Moisture required to move into germination zone. Controls most winter annuals-both grasses and broadleaf weeds. Safe in perennial landscape areas.
- **Matrix**® and generics (Rimsulfuron) 3 oz./acre. Some agriculture use. Timing late summer/early fall. Good control. Early spring (post emergent) applications suppression only 2oz./acre.
- **Rejuvra**® Indaziflam. Up to 5 oz. Acre. Labeled for Range and Pasture! Needs moisture event after application. Apply summer before late season moisture events. *Up to 5 years of control!*
- **Esplanade**®200SC Indaziflam. Use rate varies. *Not for range and pasture.* Needs moisture event after application for pre-emergent control. *Up to 5 years of control!*

### Post Emergent

- **Roundup**® and generics (Glyphosate) 8-16 oz./acre. Plants must be green and growing. For best results, treatment should coincide with early seed head emergence of the most mature plants. Caution for off target damage to any desirable plants with **any** green showing in early spring or late fall!
- **Esplanade**® EZ- Indaziflam, Glyphosate, Diquat (pre/post emergent) herbicide. Use rate varies. *Not for range and pasture.* Needs moisture event after application for pre-emergent control. Will harm any desirable plants that are green and growing.

Want more information? Contact Park County Weed and Pest at 307-754-4521 or check out these publications.

<https://www.hcn.org/blogs/goat/the-cattle-cheatgrass-connection>  
[www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1246.pdf](http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1246.pdf)  
[www.uwoextension.org/highplainscroppsite/lessons-from-the-cheatgrass-workshop/](http://www.uwoextension.org/highplainscroppsite/lessons-from-the-cheatgrass-workshop/)



\*If little or no cheat grass is present, carefully managing grazing to reduce overutilization is key to prevent degradation of desirable native species thus allowing the potential for cheatgrass invasion to occur. Once invasion occurs, intensive grazing then becomes a tool for management in those areas. Try fall/early spring grazing when other desirable species are dormant but cheatgrass is still green and soft. Move stock or reduce numbers as soon as the cool season grasses begin to grow.

***Unfortunately, there are currently no cost share options available through Park County Weed and Pest Control District at this time.***