

Meadow Hawkweed

Hieracium caespitosum

To date, meadow hawkweed has not been found in Asotin County. However, Wallowa County has been battling this weed for nine years. Treating and retreating infestation sites and extensive surveys in surrounding areas has slowed the spread of this aggressive European invader -but has not stopped it. Meadow hawkweed takes over higher elevation pastures and meadows (2,000 plus feet) and riparian areas. Hawkweed forms a solid mat that can choke out other plants. The wind borne seeds allow rapid spread to new areas. Runners and rhizomes allow rapid domination of new sites by forming new plants adjacent to the parent plant.

Washington Department of Agriculture funded surveys in the Grouse Flats area for high priority weed species for 2011. The Asotin survey team found meadow hawkweed June 15 on Grouse Flats, ¼ mile south of the Asotin County boundary. Asotin volunteers and Oregon weed crews worked all day on Sunday, June 19, to treat the site and survey the surrounding areas.

Meadow Hawkweed is a creeping perennial plant with fibrous roots. A rosette of leaves on the ground will have 2-8 flower stems. Meadow Hawkweed can take root and form new plants through rhizomes (underground horizontal stems) or runners (above-ground stems - like strawberry plants do). Slender flower stems have terminal clusters of small dandelion-like yellow flowers. Hawkweed seeds look very similar to Dandelion seeds and are spread by wind. Stems contain a milky sap and are usually bare of leaves. Leaves grow at the base of the plant and are narrow, 4-6 inches long, dark green above, and lighter green below.

All parts of this plant are lightly covered with fine hairs. There is a native Hawkweed that looks very similar but it is *very* hairy, does not have stolons or rhizomes and usually does not grow in thick patches.

Small infestations of meadow hawkweed can be eradicated by careful and repeated digging out of the rosettes and roots. Do not scatter the roots, stolons, or rhizome; they will start new plants. Mowing is ineffective! Fertilizer can help natives out compete hawkweed. Spring treatments, with both herbicide and nitrogen fertilizer, work best. Picloram (Tordon 22k), Clopyralid (i.e. Transline, Redeem) or Aminopyralid (Milestone) should be applied after most of the basal leaves emerge, but before flower buds form. Fall treatments should also be effective for these chemicals, but research is limited.

