

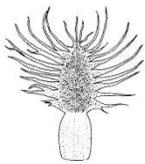


FACT SHEET

MEADOW KNAPWEED

(Centaurea jacea x nigra)

- Meadow knapweed grows 20 to 40 inches tall. The upright stem branches about half way up.
- The leaves at the base of the plant are lance-shaped, up to six inches long, undivided and stalked. The stem leaves are smaller and stalkless.
- The flower heads are solitary and almost nickel sized.
- The flowers, which bloom from July to November, are usually rose-purple in color, but can be white.
- The seeds are 1/8 inch long, tipped with a tuft of bristles.
- The seedlings are tap-rooted and can form dense mats. The seedling leaves are lance shaped, with a net-like pattern of veins. They can be slightly toothed.



- The bracts, which occur at the base of the flower head, have a fringed margin, about equal in width to the body of the bract. Bracts are modified leaves, usually near a flower. In most knapweed species the bracts form a cup-like structure that supports the flower head. Some knapweeds are similar looking and differences in the bracts can be an important way of distinguishing species.

- Sunflower family.

DISTRIBUTION:

Meadow knapweed is common in pastures and on roadsides in Jefferson County, especially on West Valley and Center Roads.

WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Meadow knapweed is an aggressive and invasive species that invades pastures and meadows.
- Unpalatable itself, it displaces grasses and other more valuable forage plants.

Meadow knapweed is a Class B Noxious Weed. Control is required in Jefferson County.

ECOLOGY:

- Meadow knapweed grows mainly on moist sites—irrigated pastures, moist meadows and riparian areas.
- It is a perennial plant, growing from a woody root crown.
- Reproduction is mostly by seed, but the crown can re-sprout.

CONTROL

Prevention and early detection are the best means of control!

- **Practice** good pasture management; avoid overgrazing, irrigate and fertilize as needed, and reseed bare ground. A healthy pasture will resist weed invasion.
- **Use** weed free hay and seed; avoid bringing in weed contaminated soil.
- **Clean** equipment that has been used in infested areas.
- **Remove** seedlings when young; newly established plants can usually be pulled without leaving root fragments in the ground.
- **Replant** newly weeded areas with desirable (preferably native) plant species, that will discourage reinfestation.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly, bag or burn seed heads or fragments that may resprout.
- **Monitor** the site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

HANDPULLING/DIGGING works best when the soil is moist. This method can be time consuming because the root system can be extensive; it may only be effective for new or small infestations.

MOWING will slow, but not stop the spread of knapweed. Plants that are periodically mowed continue to flower and produce seed on shorter plants, prolonging the season of growth and flowering and allowing the plant to spread.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL: the seed head gall fly, *Urophora quadrifasciata*, attacks the flower heads and lowers seed production, but will not destroy the plant.

HERBICIDES can be effective, but should always be applied with care. Do not apply herbicides over or near water bodies. Read the label to check that you are applying a herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount. For perennial weeds, long term control requires stopping seed production **and** attacking the weed's root system. Translocated herbicides, (ones that move throughout a plant's system) are recommended. These are most effective on young, actively growing plants because the herbicide moves around the plant more quickly. Also, herbicide is more easily absorbed by clean, new leaves.

- **Note:** Most herbicides will **NOT** prevent germination of weed seeds already in the soil, so monitoring and retreatment are necessary.

Call the Weed Board for specific herbicide advice.