



FACT SHEET

TANSY RAGWORT

(*Senecio jacobaea*)

- Tansy ragwort grows one to four feet tall at maturity.
- The stems are stout, erect and can be branched.
- The leaves are deeply lobed with a ruffled appearance.
- The conspicuous yellow flowers, which bloom from July to October, occur in clusters. The flowers have 10-15 petals, most often 13.
- The seeds have a white pappus, like a dandelion seed.
- Sunflower family

LOOK ALIKES:

There are several common look-a-likes, such as common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), common groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), woodland groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*) and St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). For help identifying plants contact the County Noxious Weed Coordinator.



Tansy ragwort seedling

DISTRIBUTION:

Tansy ragwort occurs in pastures and along roadsides throughout much of Jefferson County.

WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Tansy ragwort is invasive and will establish itself readily in disturbed areas.
- It is toxic and can be lethal to livestock.
- The toxic properties remain when the plant is cut and dried in hay, where it is difficult for animals to avoid eating it.
- The toxins accumulate in an animal's body, causing irreversible liver damage and poor health or death.
- The toxic properties may also be a threat to humans, because honey or milk can be contaminated if bees or goats utilize tansy ragwort plants.
- All parts of the plant are poisonous, but flowers have the highest concentration of toxins.

**Tansy ragwort is a Class B Noxious Weed.
Control is required county-wide.**

ECOLOGY:

- Tansy ragwort can survive under most conditions.
- It is a biennial, producing a dense rosette of dark green leaves the first year, and long stalks and flowers the second year.
- Reproduction is mainly by seed. One plant produces 5,000 to 200,000 seeds, which can remain viable in the soil for up to 16 years.

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 introducing 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.

CUTTING is not an effective control method. Cutting before flowering does not destroy the plant, but will *encourage* development by stimulating the growth of side shoots. Cut plants may not die as biennials usually do, but may survive, produce more seed, and grow even more vigorously.

PULLING can be very effective, especially when the ground is soft and moist. Remove as much of the root as possible or the plant will resprout. All flower heads should be clipped off, bagged and disposed of. If flowering plants are pulled and left on the ground, the flowers WILL make seed! If seeds are already present they should be gathered gently into plastic bags to minimize escape.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL Two insects have been introduced for biological control of tansy ragwort:

- During the fall through the early spring, the larvae of the **Ragwort flea beetle** (*Longitarsus jacobaeae*) burrow into and feed on roots, injuring or killing them.
- The larvae of the **Ragwort seed fly**, (*Pegohylemyia seneciella*) feed on the developing seed heads.

*Note that the **Cinnabar moth** (*Tyria jacobaeae*) which has been a popular bio-control, is no longer recommended because it feeds on other *Senecio* species, some of which are native.

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. 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.
- Application in the first year rather than the second year will give better control.
- Livestock should be excluded for up to 2 weeks from treated areas because herbicides may make the plants more palatable, but not less poisonous.

Call the Weed Board for specific herbicide advice.

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