

# Medusahead Fact Sheet

*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*

Poaceae Family



Chris Evans, Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Bugwood.org



Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org



Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org

## Distinguishing Features:

- ❶ **Flowers:** Flowers are long awned and barbed at the end. Over time they become twisted, and are reminiscent of the Medusahead snake.
- ❷ **Seeds:** Often confused with foxtail barley, Medusahead seed heads do not break apart as the seed matures.
- ❸ **Leaves:** Stems are wiry with a few short leaves that are somewhat rolled.
- ❹ **Flowering Time:** Germinates in the fall and, lives dormant over the winter, and sets seed in the spring.
- ❺ **Life cycle:** A winter annual ranging from 6-24 inches in size. Medusahead prefers clay soil, because of its' ability to hold moisture late in the season when fall germination takes place.

## Impacts:

- Invades grasslands and rangelands, and can reduce the carrying capacity for domestic livestock up to 75%.
- The barbs can puncture grazing animals, and are easily transported because of their ability to cling to feet and fur of humans and animals.
- It is extremely competitive, and can form dense stands as thick as 100 plants per square foot.

## Control:

- No one method will eradicate Medusahead, and it is very important to incorporate revegetation into long term management plans.
- For larger infestations, disking or plowing, chemical applications, and burning has proven to be the most effective combination of methods.
- Because of its' life cycle, control measures are most effective when implemented in both the fall as a preemergence, and the following early spring as a post emergence.
- Herbicide applications including Plateau, Plateau/Roundup and Landmark applied in the fall preemergence or very early post emergence in the spring can provide control greater than 90%.



Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org



Salt Lake County Weed  
Control Program  
[www.weeds.slco.org](http://www.weeds.slco.org)  
385-468-6101  
weeds@slco.org