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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Catch and Control Hoary Alyssum Now for Healthy Forage, Crops, and Livestock**

***Early Identification and rapid response key to control***

***Alt: Quickly identify and get rid of this inconspicuous weed for best protection***

**Olympia—July 16, 2015**—Farmers can grow healthier fields, rangelands, and orchards by controlling hoary alyssum now, before it forms large, hard-to-control patches, which can poison livestock and lower the carrying capacity of rangeland. Hoary alyssum (*Berteroa incana*), a slender weed with tight clusters of tiny white flowers, can be hard to spot to the inexperienced. Because of this year's drought, however, it's especially important to catch it early: It is highly adapted to dry conditions, and populations are known to explode in rangeland after droughts. Horses are especially vulnerable to toxins in hoary alyssum, and they can become sick and potentially die after eating enough of it in forage and hay. In Okanogan County this spring, several horses fell ill after eating it, although they have fortunately since recovered.

"As soon as you see it, kill it," says Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board Manager Anna Lyon, who recommends pulling or digging it out or using herbicide. One infestation in Okanogan, where controlling hoary alyssum is mandatory, covers 60 acres. "It's incredibly invasive. If it's not actively controlled, in any situation, you will see it increase."

Hoary alyssum is a Class-B noxious weed that is rapidly spreading in northeast Washington, in Ferry, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, and Stevens counties. West of the Cascade

Mountains, it is present in Clallam, Clark, and Jefferson counties. Control is required by law in many counties; check your county noxious weed board, through [http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/nwcb\\_county.htm](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/nwcb_county.htm).

### **Description**

Hoary alyssum can aggressively spread almost anywhere. Look for a silvery-gray plant 1 to 3.5 feet tall in pastures, hayfields, dry fields, rangeland, roadsides, embankments, and orchards. April through October. This noxious weed is covered in short hairs that give it that silvery look. It produces tight, rounded clusters of tiny bright-white flowers, each with 4 petals that are deeply notched, giving the appearance of 8 petals. Leaves at base of plants are oblong in shape, being wider toward the tips. Stem leaves are alternately arranged and decrease in size up the stem. Plants overwinter as a low-growing circle, or rosette, of fuzzy, lance-shaped leaves, which can be confused with narrowleaf hawksbeard, spreadingpod rockcress, tower rockcress, and hairy rockcress.

### **Control**

Hoary alyssum can invade healthy pasture and irrigated fields of alfalfa, clover, and birdsfoot trefoil, although it more often thrives in stressed and overgrazed areas and on bare ground. Preventing infestations is the best defense against hoary alyssum. It is important to maintain healthy pasture and rangeland, rotate crops, carefully manage nutrients and water, and reseed bare ground with native plants or forage. On pastures and rangeland, combine herbicide applications with prescribed grazing.

If you find even one plant, eliminate it before it multiplies for the easiest, cheapest protection. Learn how to identify hoary alyssum, and be alert for its small, white flower clusters spring through fall. Late fall and winter are good times to find and get rid of rosettes. Landowners who don't grow hay or livestock can support farmers by controlling hoary alyssum, too.

Avoid spreading hoary alyssum seeds by cleaning vehicles, hay cutter-balers, and other equipment, as well as footwear, before moving to another field. If possible, pull or dig small infestations by hand before plants flower and set seed. Broadleaf herbicides that work on other weedy plants in the Mustard family (Brassicaceae) might work well on hoary alyssum. Your county noxious weed control board can advise you in selecting, applying, and timing herbicide use.

Be alert to any of the symptoms of hoary alyssum poisoning in horses and other livestock. A horse might act drunk or depressed or have lower-leg swelling (stock up), a fever, or diarrhea. In severe cases, animals have stiff joints and are reluctant to move. Cows may stop producing milk. Both horses and cattle can lose their appetite.

The term "noxious weed" is a legal term for any invasive, nonnative plant that threatens agricultural crops, local ecosystems, or fish and wildlife habitat. For help identifying and developing a management plan for hoary alyssum, contact your county noxious weed control board, through [http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/nwcb\\_county.htm](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/nwcb_county.htm).

## Photographs

These photographs and more are available at <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/detail.asp?weed=12#photos>.



FIGURE 1: FLOWERS, WITH FOUR DEEPLY NOTCHED PETALS, GROW IN TIGHT CLUSTERS. (FROM [HTTP://WWW.NWCB.WA.GOV/ADMIN/WEEDIMAGES/HOARYALYSSUM1.JPG](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/admin/weedimages/hoaryalyssum1.jpg) )



FIGURE 2: A SINGLE PLANT CAN RAPIDLY TURN INTO A LARGE INFESTATION. (FROM [HTTP://WWW.NWCB.WA.GOV/ADMIN/WEEDIMAGES/HOARYALYSSUM5.JPG](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/admin/weedimages/hoaryalyssum5.jpg))



FIGURE 3: FLOWERS AND SEEDS RIPEN FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE PLANT TO THE TOP. (FROM [HTTP://WWW.NWCB.WA.GOV/ADMIN/WEEDIMAGES/HOARYLYSSUM3.JPG](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/admin/weedimages/hoarylyssum3.jpg))