

News Release



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For Immediate Release

USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region

Weed-free Feed Required in Northwest Forests

PORTLAND, OR – As part of a larger effort to reduce invasive species on national forest lands, weed-free feed is being required in the 17 national forests and the Crooked River National Grasslands of the Pacific Northwest this year. This follows a requirement in 2007 that weed-free feed be used in Pacific Northwest Wildernesses.

Livestock owners and others will be required to use feed that is either commercially processed feed or crop products certified to be free of weed seeds. Officials will concentrate on education and compliance this year, until signage and outreach efforts are fully implemented with stricter enforcement to follow.

The new requirement says that all hay, cubed hay, straw, mulch, and other such products used or stored on national forest lands be state certified as weed free. Crop products often contain seeds of non-native weeds that germinate on public lands and damage their health and beauty. Non-native weeds such as leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, yellow star thistle, and others are alien to the United States and have no natural enemies to check their spread.

Oregon and Washington have developed certification processes for crop products. Hay fields are inspected to ensure that listed noxious weed seeds are absent. Once a field passes this inspection, hay and other crop products from the field are labeled as “certified weed-free.” Commercially processed feed (pellets and steamed, rolled grains) are not affected by the order and should be used in the affected national forest lands if certified hay products are not available.

For more information, visit www.fs.fed.us/r6/weeds

Prevention measures, such as the weed-free hay requirement, are necessary to help reduce the introduction and spread of invasive plants. The certified weed-free order is designed to prevent the spread of noxious weeds and other introduced plants often carried in straw and hay bales.

“It is important we work together to manage this serious issue on public lands,” said Deschutes National Forest Supervisor John Allen. “The good news is we now have a number of local growers and retail outlets available as sources for weed-free hay in the tri-county area (Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook) of Central Oregon.”

Many users of hay and straw are backcountry horsemen who travel to wilderness and other remote areas. Consequently, invasive plant introduction may go undetected, increasing the likelihood of weed establishment and spread. Hay is often deposited in areas of exposed soil, such as trailheads, campsites and watering holes, providing conditions that are susceptible to weed seed germination. Requiring weed-free hay will help reduce opportunities for damaging weeds to get established.

Invasive plants, commonly called noxious or weedy plants, are a serious problem in the United States, causing billions of dollars in damages annually to agricultural, recreational and tourist industries. Our public natural areas are being lost at an estimated rate of 4,600 acres per day to invasive species. According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, noxious weeds cost Oregon citizens about \$100 million a year. For more information, go to http://oregon.gov/ODA/CID/weed_free_forage.shtml or www.oregonweeds.org

Noxious weeds displace native plants, reduce habitat for native animals and threaten the diversity of wildlands. They spoil pastures and rangelands, alter soil fertility, dry up water supplies, poison animals, decrease agricultural production, clog rivers and reduce the recreational value of wildlands.

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