

ORANGE HAWKWEED DECLARED A NOXIOUS WEED IN BRAZEAU COUNTY

Hieracium aurantiacum

In the past four years, the Municipal Weed Inspectors have been finding locations which have Orange and Yellow Hawkweed.

This is a relatively new plant for our area and local farmers will have to be on the lookout for this plant. Orange Hawkweed has now been declared a noxious weed within the County and therefore control measures are required. During the past four years, the sites with Hawkweed have grown from three confirmed sites in 1998 to 60 locations in 2001.

The concern arises over the rapid spread of the plant and the extremely aggressive nature of the plant.



The Hawkweeds (orange and yellow) are a descendant of a European plant, and are noted for their aggressive spreading from seeds, stolons (above ground roots like strawberry runners), and rhizomes (below ground spreading roots like Quackgrass).

The plants start as a rosette (like a dandelion) in the spring, and have lance-like, hairy leaves, broader at the tip but still three to four times longer than wide. The entire plant has a milky sap which is bitter to taste.



Prior to flowering, the central stems will elongate to 20 to 70 cm (8 to 20 inches) and produce 5 to 30 flowers. The Orange Hawkweed is also called Devil's Paint Brush and is sometimes mistaken at a glance for Indian Paint Brush (a native plant).

The root system for the Hawkweed is very fibrous and makes hand-pulling a challenge. The plants normally invade through disturbed areas, roadsides and pastures. The aggressive nature of the plant can also have it show up as a problem in lawn margins and flower beds.

At present the majority of our known locations are in the Ashland Dam/Breton - Fifteen Lakes areas, but plants have been found along Highway 30 and in the West Antross area. If you suspect that you have seen this plant or might have some on your property, call the Agricultural Services Department for information on control.

At present, the County is investigating a joint project with the Counties of Leduc and Wetaskiwin to address the whole infestation area and remove this threat to our pasture and hay lands.

Keys to Identification

- Leaves are basal, spatula-shaped and covered with stiff hairs
- Orange flowering heads are clustered on the top of leafless stems
- Plants contain milky juice

Keys to Biology

- Perennial reproducing from seeds, stolons (like strawberries) or rhizomes (like

quack grass)

- When soil is left bare, a patch can quickly become a solid mat of rosettes that crowd out other species

Keys to Control

- Maintain a healthy cover of perennial plants
- Re-seed controlled areas with desirable species
- Avoid mowing, as it prevents seed production, but encourages vegetative growth
- Herbicide applications are effective on range and pasture situations

For more information contact the Brazeau County Agricultural Services Department at 780-542-7777.