

WARNING:

Medusahead is highly invasive.

If you encounter this grass, do not help it escape. We have drawn a line in the sand. Keep your rangelands medusahead-free.

The Story

Medusahead has spread from its original infestation near Roseburg, Oregon in the late 1880's to millions of acres across the West. This winter annual grass is able to compete with desirable forage species because of: 1) rapid fall germination and root growth throughout the winter, 2) prolific seed production, and 3) accumulation of a thick litter mat that decomposes slowly. This invader is even capable of replacing cheatgrass in areas where soils are clayey and winters are mild. Once it dominates, rehabilitation or restoration is extremely difficult. It is time to draw a line in the sand and prevent the spread of **medusahead** onto new rangelands.

The Culprit

Medusahead is a slender, mat forming annual grass that grows around 6 to 24 inches tall, with leaf blades $\leq 1/8^{\text{th}}$ inch wide. You can spot seedlings in late or early spring when the seed heads look similar to squirltail or foxtail barley. However, as the seedhead matures, the long awns become slightly barbed and erratically twisted, resembling the mythic creature Medusa who turned her victims to stone with one sight of her snake-covered head. Late in the season, patches of this grass will turn a light straw color that seems to reflect sunlight, aiding its identification on the landscape.



WANTED-DEAD

.... NOT ALIVE!



Photo from <http://www.ars.cvm.ars.gov/medusahead.htm>

Medusahead (aka: Medusahead Rye)

Taeniatherum caput-madusae (L.) Nevski

Hold the Line Against Medusahead

- Step 1: Map the boundaries of existing weed infestations.
- Step 2: Meet with neighbors.
- Step 3: Identify and agree on where the medusahead-free line should be drawn.
- Step 4: Develop and implement prevention strategies like seasonally avoiding ATV travel on infested sites.
- Step 5: Develop an educational program, such as road signs that remind everyone using your roads to check tires and animals for weed seeds before entering a weed-free area.
- Step 6: Develop and implement an early detection and alert system that includes systematically searching your property for new infestations, monitoring old infestations, and keeping your neighbors aware of any weed movements.
- Step 7: Design a medusahead eradication program that will quickly respond to new infestations and monitor your progress each year.