"B" Rated Weeds

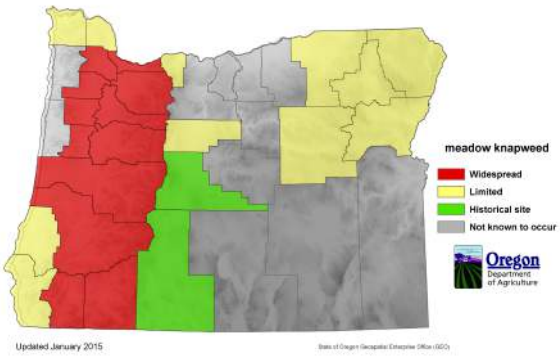
A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties

Meadow knapweed
Centaurea pratensis

Other common names: hybrid knapweed

USDA symbol: CEDE5
ODA rating: B

Introduction: Meadow knapweed is a hybrid species with its parentage in Europe. Initially introduced in the Northwest for livestock forage, it is now well established in Western Oregon counties where it is considered invasive. It does produce an abundance of nectar late in the season for honeybees.



Distribution in Oregon: Meadow knapweed is widely distributed in the western part of Oregon with limited but increasing distribution in the northeast and central areas.

Description: Meadow knapweed is a hybrid of black and brown knapweeds. It blooms in midsummer to fall growing from robust root crown. Plant height generally reaches 3'. The lower leaves are long-stalked, upper leaves having no stalk. Stems are many-branched and tipped by a solitary flower head up to one inch wide. Flower heads are pink to reddish purple, oval or almost globe-shaped. A key-identifying feature is the brown brushy-fringed bracts on the flower head.
Meadow knapweed's tough perennial root system makes manual control methods very difficult.

Impacts: Meadow knapweed out-competes grasses and other pasture species, reducing grass productivity for forage though sheep find it quite edible. It is susceptible to herbicide treatments, but control efforts must persist for the long-term to decrease soil-seed stocks. It will invade native prairie, oak savannah even clearcuts. Meadow knapweed favors roadsides, sand or gravel bars, riverbanks, irrigated pastures, moist meadows, and forest openings. It also invades industrial sites, tree farms, and grasslands.

Biological controls: Some approved biological control agents released for other knapweeds have become established on meadow knapweed including a seed-head fly, a seed-head moth, and two seed-head weevils. This plant is currently being tested as a host for other approved knapweed biocontrol agents.

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Photos by Eric Coombs and Tom Forney, ODA