



Control Options for Field Horsetail



General Information

Field horsetail is one of several members of the horsetail family that grows in western Washington. These primitive plants are very invasive and difficult to control, once established. The large system of underground rhizomes make manual control difficult, and the high silica content and waxy plant coating limit the effectiveness of herbicides. Horsetail spreads both by spores and by rhizomes. It is poisonous to livestock, both when it is alive and when dried.

Manual/Mechanical Techniques

Small infestations of horsetail may be controlled by completely removing the stems at ground level 2 weeks after each emergence, for a period of 3 to 4 years. Covering the ground with heavy-duty landscape fabric can be used to manage horsetail, but rhizomes will grow out to the edge of the fabric and emerge there, if possible. Natural mulches (bark, wood chips, etc.) are not very effective but may help loosen the soil for manual removal

Chemical Recommendations

Horsetail can be managed using specific herbicides, although eradication may not be feasible. When using herbicides, always read and follow label directions for rates, spraying conditions, personal protective equipment and grazing intervals. Do not spray when it is windy or raining, or when rain is forecast. Do not cut sprayed plants for at least 2 weeks after herbicide application. Herbicides should not be sprayed within 60 feet of water bodies and creeks, without further consultation with the Noxious Weed Board. Remember, it is the herbicide applicators responsibility to apply the product in accordance to the instructions on the label.

Dichlobenil (Casoron) can be used to suppress horsetail growth, but may or may not be appropriate for your site. May be applied in late winter or early spring. Follow label instructions carefully to determine application methods, timing and rates, and to ensure desired vegetation will not be harmed. The granular formulation *must* be raked in and/or watered or covered with mulch in order to be effective. All existing vegetation should be removed prior to application.

MCPA can be applied to horsetail when fully emerged. A reduction of 20-30% can result in each spray treatment. Follow-up treatments are likely necessary and more than one treatment per year may be required. Control will be lost if a year of treatment is skipped. Follow labeled rates for horsetail.

- **Always read and understand the label of the herbicides you choose to use.**
- **More is NOT better when using herbicides, and may actually hinder the ability of the herbicide to injure the target plant if the solution is too strong. This wastes money and effort and puts more product into the environment than is necessary. ALWAYS follow the recommended rates on the label.**
- **With all herbicides, when you apply them is as important as how you apply them.**

NEVER apply RoundUp® or other herbicides to standing water unless they are distinctly labeled for aquatic use. Ingredients in non-aquatic products may be toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms. Aquatic formulations of herbicides are generally only available to licensed pesticide applicators in Washington State. If the target plants are immediately adjacent to or are in standing water, a state permit may be required in order to treat those plants with an aquatically approved herbicide.

The mention of a specific product brand name in this document is not, and should not be construed as an endorsement or as a recommendation for the use of that product. Herbicide information is taken from the WSU Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook.