



Equisetum arvense

Field Horsetail

Horsetail, Scouringrush, Mare's Tail, Snakegrass

Family: Equisetaceae

Origins: Native to the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere, including the Pacific Northwest. Their stems contain high amounts of silica once used to clean or scour surfaces, which has given many species in the *Equisetum* genus another common name – Scouringrush.

Range: Found throughout the United States.

Habitat: Commonly found along roadsides, ditch banks, pastures, and home landscapes. Field Horsetail prefers wet moist areas but can survive in dry areas once established.

Impact: Although Field Horsetail is a native plant in the Pacific Northwest, it is considered a nuisance weed to gardeners and farmers. It forms dense colonies along irrigation banks, crop fields, and pastures, which can interfere with crop yield. Field Horsetail reproduces from spores, spreading rhizomes, and tubers. It is toxic to livestock.

Description: Field Horsetail is a perennial that grows from a creeping root system. Hollow stems can grow up to 4 feet tall and contain silica, making them sticky or rough to touch.

Horsetail has two distinct types of stems. One type is sterile, green, and has green needle-like leaves in whorls around the nodes. The second type of stems are shorter and fertile, tan-colored, without leaves, and have an inch-long spore-producing cone at the tip. Both types of stems emerge in the spring, with the fertile stem usually emerging first.

Common Look-Alikes: Giant Horsetail, Bamboo, Knotweed.

** Field Horsetail is toxic to livestock, especially in spring or when mixed into hay. It may cause weakness, difficulty moving, rigid muscles, trembling, weak pulse, constipation, seizures, and coma.*



Integrated Pest Management - Control Methods

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) combines various methods such as mechanical, cultural, biological, and chemical controls to manage pests. IPM offers the possibility of improving the efficiency of pest control while reducing its negative environmental impacts. For more information, see the Cowlitz County Noxious Weed's IPM Resources & Strategy Guide or contact your local Noxious Weed Control Board to develop a customized IPM plan.

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Non-Herbicide Control

Mechanical (pulling, cutting, digging, etc.)	Mechanical methods are not recommended as the only means of control. Repeat cutting or mowing every few weeks before the cones emerge over multiple years may help provide some control. Pulling and tilling will likely encourage growth.
Cultural	Mulching or using plastic will not deter Field Horsetail growth. Maintaining healthy, competitive ground cover plants can help prevent Field Horsetail infestations. Amending the soil is effective over time; the use of the soil may determine the type of amendment. Examples of amendments include improving drainage, increasing the pH of the soil (adding lime), or increasing soil fertility (adding nitrogen fertilizer). Amendments encourage healthy forage species and grass crops, giving them a competitive advantage over Field Horsetail.
Biological	Biological agents are currently not available for Field Horsetail in Washington State.

Herbicide Control: Foliar Broadcast Treatment

Aminocyclopyrachlor + chlorsulfuron (Perspective)	Timing: Apply to actively growing plants in spring. Remarks: Even low rates can kill non-target tree and shrub species, avoid application within a distance equal to the tree height of sensitive species; do not allow spray to drift off-target; can injure grass species; for best results, use a non-ionic surfactant; do not apply near water.
Chlorsulfuron (Telar)	Timing: Apply preemergence or early postemergence. Remarks: Use on non-cropland only; do not apply to the frozen ground; maintain constant agitation while mixing the product with water; avoid contact with sensitive crops; do not treat powdery, dry soils and light, sandy soils if rain is not likely after treatment; do not apply to the frozen ground; refer to the label for use in aquatic areas.
Dichlobenil (Casoron)	Timing: Apply in winter or early spring, when moisture is available to leach chemicals into the soil. In landscape plantings, apply any time and place bark mulch over the treated area to reduce volatilization. Remarks: See label for precautions on ornamental species and varieties tolerant of Dichlobenil; grazing livestock is prohibited; do not apply near water.
MCPA	Timing: Apply when Horsetail fully emerges and before grain or grass is in the boot stage. Remarks: Apply once or twice per year until Field Horsetail is controlled; skipping a year means losing the control gained up to that time; avoid drift to sensitive crops; do not apply near water.

* Cowlitz County Noxious Weed Control Board does not endorse any product or brand name. Brand names are listed as an example only. Other commercial products may contain the listed active chemical for herbicide control. Always read and follow the safety protocols and rate recommendations on the herbicide label. **The Label is The Law.**

This control sheet includes excerpts from the Written Findings of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (WSNWCB), nwcb.wa.gov. Herbicide information from the PNW Weed Management Handbook (ISBN 978-1-931979-22-1) and product labels.