

## KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OFFICIAL CONTROL METHODS FOR  
RUSSIAN KNAPWEED

Rhaponticum repens (L.) Hidalgo  
Revised May 20, 2020

**DESCRIPTION**

Russian knapweed is a perennial forb that was introduced from Asia. It reproduces by roots, rhizomes and seeds. Stems are up to 3 feet tall, often branched near the base, ridged, covered with soft white or gray hairs, and develop, from a particularly well-developed branching root system. Leaves are alternate and nearly hairless to moderately hairy: rosette and lower stem leaves are oblanceolate to broadly lanceolate or oblong, up to 4 inches long, and deeply lobed to nearly entire; upper stem leaves are progressively smaller, oblong, and toothed or entire. Flowers are all tubular, rose to purple or blue, and borne in flask-shaped heads, about 0.5-0.75 inch long. The heads are solitary on the ends of leafy branches. The seed-like fruits are an ivory to light brown, about 1/8 inch long, flattened, ovate, longitudinally-ridged, and topped with numerous capillary bristles 1/4-1/2 inch long. Flowering from June-August fruiting from August-September.

**PREVENTION OF SPREAD**

The Noxious Weed Law (K.S.A. 2-1313a et. seq.) requires all landowners to control the spread of and to eradicate Russian knapweed on all lands owned or supervised by them. Methods used for control must prevent both the production of viable seed and destroy the plant's ability to reproduce by vegetative means. Infestation sites must be monitored after control methods have been accomplished to ensure that dormant seeds in the seedbank do not germinate and establish new infestations.

**RUSSIAN KNAPWEED CONTROL PRACTICES**

Russian knapweed control means that both the roots and the flowers must be destroyed. Because Russian knapweed is a perennial, with the exception of herbicide applications, one or more of the following methods must be used together to control Russian knapweed.

**Cultural Control**

Cultural weed control involves land and vegetation management techniques used to prevent the establishment or control the spread of noxious weeds.

While palatability is considered low, the use of sheep or goats to graze Russian knapweed may be used during the early vegetative to flowering stage then repeated as necessary, after 8 to 10 inches of regrowth, to prevent the production of flowers. Repeat grazing each year to deplete the seedbank and provide control.

Frequent surveys of fence lines, roadway, ditches and other susceptible areas for new infestations and the quick removal of any new plants will prevent Russian knapweed from becoming established.

**Mechanical Control**

Mechanical weed control involves the physical removal of all parts or just the reproductive parts of weeds.

As a perennial species, Russian knapweed is difficult to control mechanically.

Hand pulling or hoeing can be effective for small, less established infestations of Russian knapweed if repeated whenever the plant emerges during the growing season, over multiple years. Removal is generally easier and more effective in late spring when soil is moist and plants are beginning to bolt (but before seed set). It is very important to pull up all parts of the plant, especially the roots.

## **Chemical Control**

The following herbicides may be used for cost-share with landowners. Other products labeled and registered for use on this noxious weed in Kansas may be used in accordance with label directions but are not available for cost-share. Be sure to follow all label directions and precautions. For additional information consult the most recent edition of the KSU publication of "Chemical Weed Control for Field Crops, Pastures, Rangeland, and Noncropland".

Any two or more of the herbicides listed below may be available for cost-share as a pre-mix or a tank mix if allowed on the respective labels. Contact your county weed program for availability.

<b>Herbicide</b>	<b>Mode of Action</b>
2,4-D LV Ester	4
aminopyralid	4
chlorsulfuron	2
dicamba	4
glyphosate	9
imazapic	2
imazapyr	2
picloram	4

## **Biological Control**

Biological control refers to the deliberate application of a living organism to control the spread of weeds. These agents will not eradicate their host plant, therefore other control methods must be used in addition to the use of biological control agents as part of an integrated pest management strategy. The importation of biological control agents is regulated by USDA-APHIS and is allowed by permit only. The following agents are permitted for use on Russian knapweed. Other agents may be available for use if the appropriate permit is obtained.

Aulacidea acroptilonica  
Jaapiella ivannikovi  
Subanguina picridis

bud gall wasp  
bud gall midge  
leaf stem gall nematode