

HALOGETON

[*Halogeton glomeratus* (M. Bieb.) C. A. Mey.]



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State Noxious Weed List: **No.**

Halogeton is a poisonous, noxious weed introduced from Eurasia and first was reported in Nevada in 1934. Since then it has spread to millions of acres in the western U.S., especially in range and wildlands. This plant often is found in alkaline soils and semiarid regions, particularly when the areas have been disturbed by overgrazing, off-road vehicles, new roads and similar disturbances. Halogeton was reported in North Dakota for the first time in 2009, but because of the size of the infestations, it likely has been in the state for some time.

Identification and growth form:

Halogeton is an annual weed in the goosefoot family and grows from a only a few inches to more than 24 inches tall, depending on location and moisture. Each plant has about five main stems that grow out and then up from the crown, branching out similarly to Russian thistle, which this plant resembles. The blue-green leaves are small and sausage-shaped, and have a short bristle or spine at the end. The flowers are found in the leaf axils, greenish and not showy. Even though the plant is an annual, the taproot can grow nearly 2 feet down and out from the crown. Mature plants have red stems. The brown-black seeds are contained in a bracted pouch that often are mistaken for flowers and give the plant a “wooly” appearance at maturity. Halogeton produces as many as 75 seeds per inch of stem and seeds are viable from one year (early season production) to more than 10 years (developed after mid-August).

Why is this plant a concern?

Halogeton contains soluble sodium oxalates that are poisonous to sheep and cattle. The plant is not palatable when green but may be consumed in toxic quantities in late summer, fall and winter. Dried plants may contain 30 to 40 percent sodium oxalate, and the lethal dose for an adult sheep is reached when the animal consumes 0.3 to 0.5 percent of total body weight in a short time. Cattle are not likely to eat enough to be poisoned unless feed is short. Sheep can develop a tolerance to halogeton through time and consume this weed without illness if foliage from other plants is also part of the diet.

How do I control this plant?

Chemical. 2,4-D will control plants if applied very early in the spring prior to flowering. Escort (metsulfuron) is very effective and can be applied throughout the growing season. Plateau (imazapic) also will control this weed and can be applied both pre- and post-emergence. Spike (tebuthiuron) provides total vegetation control for several years and may be desirable for use on railroad ballast and oil field locations, where halogeton often is found.

Cultural. Halogeton is an early invader of disturbed sites. Avoid overgrazing an area and reseed disturbed sites to native grasses and forbs to prevent halogeton from becoming established. Halogeton competes poorly with established perennial vegetation.

Biological. No biological control agents or pathogens are available for this weed.