



## Invasive Species Council of Manitoba

### August 8 2017 - Press Release - Invasive Species Awareness Month

The Invasive Species Council of Manitoba (ISCM) has declared August 2017 as Invasive Species Awareness Month. In an effort to foster awareness of invasive species in Manitoba and to highlight the environmental and economic damage they can cause the ISCM would like to share the below information on an invasive plant which is spreading in Manitoba.

*“The ISCM is concerned about invasive species and plays a unique and important role in promoting awareness, coordinating cooperation and stimulating action to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species in Manitoba.” Julie Pelc, Chair - ISCM*

### Spotted Knapweed - an Invasive Plant causing havoc in Manitoba

Spotted knapweed (Source Michele Ammeter)



Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) is an invasive plant that has causing economic and environmental damage in Manitoba.

Spotted knapweed has become problematic in pasture and rangelands in Manitoba as it is not palatable due to its allelopathic properties – this is it produces biochemicals which influence the growth of other nearby plants. British Columbia and Alberta also have both suffered from large scale knapweed invasions into their rangelands. It is regulated as a Tier 1 noxious weed in Manitoba on the *Noxious Weeds Act* and regulated under the federal *Weed Seeds Order*. But it continues to spread.

## Where is it found in Manitoba?

Until 2009 it was thought that Manitoba had only one isolated occurrence of spotted knapweed in the southeast corner. However, in 2010 a number of new sites were found east of Winnipeg and north of Highway #1. The bad news is it has continued to spread and in 2013 infestations were found in Winnipeg, Brandon, Griswold, Deloraine, in the Sandilands and at a number of locations along Highway #12 near Steinbach. It is believed that it has been spreading via rail lines and that plants are “*hitch-hiking on the rails*” into Manitoba from Northwestern Ontario.

## How do You Identify Spotted Knapweed?



Photo courtesy of by Doug Cattani

Spotted knapweed belongs to the sunflower family and it was introduced into Manitoba. It's an invader. Plant identification is quite easy once the plant has produced its distinctive bright pink flowers. The bracts on the flower are quite dark, giving the species the spotted portion of its name. The bracts give the “spotted” appearance to the flower. However, this is well past the stage where control is easy or feasible. Plants generally germinate from seed throughout the year and usually grow as a basal rosette for the rest of that year. In the second year, plants produce stems which can bear numerous flowers. Plants may consist of a single solitary stem, or may branch out at the base. While generally described as a biennial to short-lived perennial, we have plants with very large taproots and a number of years of dead stems that we estimate are 5-6 years old.

Spotted knapweed has a very small seed. The leaf has a central vein that continues to the tip with numerous lobes. Plant form changes over time. In the year of germination the plant forms a basal rosette. In the first year of reproduction, the plant will bolt in mid-to late- June and begin to flower in late June or early July. Flowering continues through August in most years. Seed from the earliest flowers will be mature prior to the last flowers opening.

## Impacts

Spotted knapweed prefers dry or well drained sites and quickly invades ditches, roadsides, fields, rangelands, gravel pits. Spotted knapweed is a highly competitive weed which degrades native plant communities reducing native plants required by our wildlife and livestock. Its allelopathic properties allow it to alter the soil preventing growth of other plants. Where it establishes plant species richness and diversity is reduced which is especially concerning for any species at risk.

*“Spotted knapweed has the potential to be more problematic than leafy spurge in Manitoba”.* According to Doug Cattani, University of Manitoba and ISCM Board Member.

## Preventing introductions of Spotted Knapweed – What can You Do?

Preventing the spread is critical. Human disturbance is the main pathway for spread as seeds contaminate other crops and are spread on cars, recreational vehicles, and machinery. The seeds of spotted knapweed travel from infested areas and one plant can produce well over 1000 seeds which remain viable in the soil for five or more years. For example, the original site in Manitoba was established from seeds brought in on equipment used for gravel extraction. Once a site has been established, movement can be on any vehicle or person that passes through a site when seed has ripened. ATV's can and do move knapweeds on roadsides, and other areas. Mowing of roadsides for winter snow control can move seed along roadsides via mowers. Care must be taken when haying roadsides to ensure that invasive weed species seed are not present as seed can be both transported on your harvesting equipment and in the hay itself back onto your land. Precaution is still the best method of control.

*“By recognizing infestations early, and getting them under control, we have the potential of reducing the impact of spotted knapweed before it has the economic impact that leafy spurge does in Manitoba, or knapweeds do in other jurisdictions.”* According to Michele Ammeter, Manitoba Weed Supervisors Association, ISCM Board member.

*Sightings should also be reported to Manitoba Agriculture and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as they both have regulatory authority over weeds and invasive plants.*

For more information on Invasive Species visit <http://invasivespeciesmanitoba.com/site/>

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Spotted knapweed spreading along on ATV trail (Image: M. Ammeter)

