NOXIOUS WEED ALERT

TANSY RAGWORT

(Senecio jacobaea)

- Tansy ragwort grows one to four feet tall at maturity.
- The stems are stout, erect and can be branched.
- The leaves are deeply lobed with a ruffled appearance.
- The conspicuous yellow flowers, which bloom from July to October, occur in clusters. The flowers have 10-15 petals, most often 13.
- The seeds have a white pappus, like a dandelion seed.

Look-a-likes (all non-native):

Common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare)*, has button like flowers and fern-like leaves with a strong smell. Common tansy is a Class C weed.

Common groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*) grows only four to eight inches tall. Its drooping flowers are never fully open.

Woodland groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*) has greenish-grey, wooly leaves and inconspicuous flowers.

Distribution:

Although tansy ragwort occurs in pastures and along roadsides throughout much of Clallam County, the worst concentrations are in the west end.

WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Tansy ragwort is invasive and will establish itself readily in disturbed areas.
- It is toxic and can be lethal to livestock.
- The toxic properties remain when the plant is cut and dried in hay, where it is difficult for animals to avoid eating it.
- The toxins accumulate in an animal's body, causing irreversible liver damage and poor health or death.
- The toxic properties are also a threat to humans, because honey or milk can be contaminated if bees or goats utilize tansy ragwort plants.
- All parts of the plant are poisonous, but flowers have the highest concentration of toxins.

Tansy ragwort is a Class B weed selected for control in some areas of the County.

Ecology:

- Tansy ragwort can survive under most conditions.
- It is a biennial, producing a dense rosette of dark green leaves the first year, and long stalks and flowers the second year.
- Reproduction is mainly by seed. One plant produces 5,000 to 200,000 seeds, which can remain viable in the soil for up to 16 years.

CONTROL

Prevention and early detection are the best means of control.

- **Practice** good pasture management; avoid overgrazing, irrigate and fertilize as needed, and reseed bare ground. A healthy pasture will resist weed invasion.
- **Use** weed free hay and seed; avoid introducing weed contaminated soil.
- **Clean** equipment that has been used in infested areas.
- **Remove** seedlings when young; newly established plants can usually be pulled without leaving root fragments in the ground.
- **Replant** newly weeded areas with desirable plant species that will discourage reinfestation.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly, bag or burn seed heads or fragments that may resprout.
- **Monitor** the site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

CUTTING is not an effective control method unless followed up with herbicide treatment. Cutting before flowering does not destroy the plant, but will *encourage* development by stimulating the growth of side shoots.. Cut plants may not die as biennials usually do, but may survive, produce more seed, and grow even more vigorously than uncut plants.

PULLING can be very effective, especially when the ground is soft and moist. Remove as much of the root as possible or the plant will resprout. All flower heads should be removed and burned. If flowers have begun to produce seeds, the plants should be gathered gently into plastic bags to minimize escape of seeds. Learn to recognize seedlings; plants are easiest to remove in the first year before developing an extensive root system.

- **Note:** Tansy ragwort is reported to be **phototoxic**. Skin contact with the sap followed by exposure to sunlight **could cause skin irritation or burning**. Wearing gloves when handling plants is recommended.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL:

Three insects have been introduced for biological control of tansy ragwort:

- The larvae of the **cinnabar moth,** (*Tyria jacobaeae*), feed on the leaves, buds and flowers.
- During the fall through the early spring, the larvae of the **ragwort flea beetle,** (*Longitarsus jacobaeae*), burrow into and feed on roots, injuring or killing them.
- The larvae of the **ragwort seed fly,** (*Pegohylemyia seneciella*), feed on the developing seed heads.

HERBICIDES can be effective, but should always be applied with care. Do not apply herbicides over or near water bodies. Read the label to check that you are applying an herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount. For perennial weeds, long term control requires stopping seed production **and** attacking the weed's root system. Translocated herbicides, (ones that move throughout a plant's system), such as Weedmaster™ (2,4-D and dicamba) or Curtail™ (2.4-D and clopyralid) are recommended.

- Herbicides are more effective on first year than second year plants
- Observe grazing restrictions because 2,4-D may make plants more attractive to livestock, but not less poisonous.

Prepared by the **Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board** revised 11/2000
For more information call **(360) 417-2442**
or see **www.clallam.net/weed**