

E. Downy Brome (“Cheatgrass”) (*Bromus tectorum*)

Key Characteristics:

Downy Brome or “cheatgrass” is a grass introduced from Eurasia. **Reproduction** is by seed. **Plants** are 4-30 inches tall and **blades** densely covered with soft hairs, giving them a downy feel. **Flowers** in mid-spring are followed by **seedheads** 2-6 inches long and usually purplish at maturity. Cheatgrass competes with more desirable perennial grasses for moisture because of its early spring emergence. Once mature, the dry plant is a nuisance and fire hazard.

Downy Brome seeds can germinate in the fall, winter, and spring. Most seeds germinate within one year of maturation. Frequent late summer or late fall rains will cause rapid germination and abundant fall growth. However, if adequate fall moisture is not available, Downy Brome can act like a spring annual.



Locations:

This plant is located throughout Pitkin County, especially along roadsides and in areas where heavy disturbance has occurred.

Biological control:

Scientists are working on specific bacteria for biological control but still in testing stage.

Cultural control:

Seeding with aggressive, native, perennial grasses can help compete against Downy Brome. Maintain range and pasture in good condition. Promote healthy grass growth through proper irrigation and fertilization. Do not overgraze.

Mechanical control:

Early spring tillage of fallow ground, tillage prior to planting spring-season crops, and tillage operations that bury downy brome seeds (mold-board plowing) are effective mechanical methods. Neither mowing nor burning are effective controls to prevent seed spread.

Chemical control:

There are effective herbicide options for Cheatgrass control. Contact the Pitkin County Land Management Department for more specific information about products, rates, and equipment calibration.