# Control Options for Field Horsetail

## General Information

Field horsetail is one of several members of the horsetail family that grows in western Washington. These primitive plants are very invasive and difficult to control, once established. The large system of underground rhizomes make manual control difficult, and the high silica content and waxy plant coating limit the effectiveness of herbicides. Horsetail spreads both by spores and by rhizomes. It is poisonous to livestock, both when it is alive and when dried.

## Manual/Mechanical Techniques

Small infestations of horsetail may be controlled by completely removing the stems at ground level 2 weeks after each emergence, for a period of 3 to 4 years. Covering the ground with heavy-duty landscape fabric can be used to manage horsetail, but rhizomes will grow out to the edge of the fabric and emerge there, if possible. Natural mulches (bark, wood chips, etc.) are not very effective but may help loosen the soil for manual removal

## Chemical Recommendations

Horsetail can be managed using specific herbicides, although eradication may not be feasible. When using herbicides, always read and follow label directions for rates, spraying conditions, personal protective equipment and grazing intervals. Do not spray when it is windy or raining, or when rain is forecast. Do not cut sprayed plants for at least 2 weeks after herbicide application. Herbicides should not be sprayed within 60 feet of water bodies and creeks, without further consultation with the Noxious Weed Board. Remember, it is the herbicide applicators responsibility to apply the product in accordance to the instructions on the label.

*Dichlobenil* (Casoron) can be used to suppress horsetail growth, but may or may not be appropriate for your site. Follow label instructions carefully to determine application methods, timing and rates, and to ensure desired vegetation will not be harmed. The granular formulation *must* be raked and/or watered in to be effective. All existing vegetation should be removed prior to application.

*Glyphosate* (marketed as RoundUp and many other brands) can be applied to actively growing plants, but re-treating will likely be necessary. A 2% glyphosate solution (of a 41% active ingredient product) should be used and applied to just wet the foliage. Because the leaf surface is covered in silica, it may be helpful to trample/rake/bruise the plants first to help the herbicide penetrate the leaf surface. Glyphosate will kill grass and other vegetation so care should be taken if used around desired vegetation.

*NEVER apply Round-up or other herbicides to standing water unless they are distinctly labeled for aquatic use.* Ingredients in these products may be toxic to fish.

- **Always read and understand the label of the herbicides you choose to use.**

- **More is NOT better when using herbicides, and may actually hinder the ability of the herbicide to injure the target plant if the solution is too strong. This wastes money and effort and puts more product into the environment than is necessary. ALWAYS follow the recommended rates on the label.**
- **With all herbicides, when you apply them is as important as how you apply them.**

*The mention of a specific product brand name in this document is not, and should not be construed as an endorsement or as a recommendation for the use of that product.* Herbicide information is taken from the WSU Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook 2010 and from the Thurston County Noxious Weed Board, Olympia, WA.