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This is a cover letter to the following:

Ravalli County Commissioners  
Ravalli County Weed Board & Department  
Bitterroot Board of Realtors  
Bitterroot Stock Growers  
Ravalli County Right to Farm & Ranch  
Bitter Root Land Trust

The attached letter is being sent to the above, as well as the Ravalli Republic and the Bitterroot Star.

As referred in the attached letter, I've talked to Kelliann numerous times over the years regarding alyssum, encouraging her to look at contracting at least some of the spraying to licensed professionals. Obviously I was wasting my time. I'm hoping that I'm not wasting my time once again.

Personally, I have tried to educate as many people as I can about alyssum even going so far as to knocking on strangers' doors regarding pasturing their horses in fields infested with alyssum. Thankfully, some, but not all have taken heed.

There will be a tipping point when people in the valley realize that hoary alyssum is a real epidemic. I'm not sure what it will take. If it's when there's so much alyssum in the hay that the producer can't sell it, or people's horses start getting sick and perhaps even die from ingestion of alyssum. Or will it be when it's worked its way into the open lands surrounding the valley? I can't believe that I'm a lone "soldier" who has these concerns.

I don't know if the average Ravalli County citizen is so used to an endless sea of weeds that they've become numb, or they've not traveled to counties such as the Beaverhead, Jefferson or eastern Montana to know what road sides should look like.

I sincerely hope that with several organizations working together something will be done. Since there are weed laws, the County already has a mechanism in place to hold landowners accountable for noxious weeds. **But**, until the County takes care of the roadsides, a landowner can hardly be asked to control their weeds.

I'm also attaching a couple informational sheets about alyssum. This information came from a Washington State Extension web site.

Sincerely,

*Linda Habeck*

Linda Habeck

11/15/2017 10:58:11 AM

# Hoary Alyssum

**Also Known as:** false hoary madwort, hoary alyssum, hoary false alyssum, hoary berteroa, healbite

**Hoary alyssum** is a **Class B Noxious Weed**: Non-native species that are either absent from or limited in distribution in some portions of the state but very abundant in other areas. The goals are to **contain** the plants where they are already widespread and **prevent** their spread into new areas

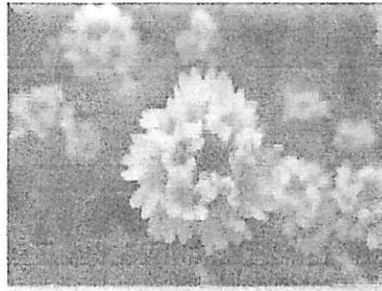
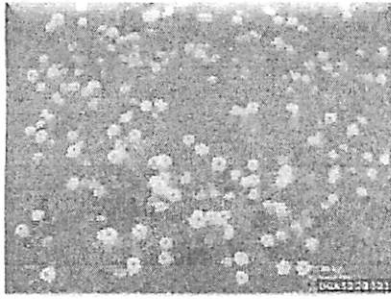
**Hoary Alyssum (*Berteroa incana* (L.) DC)**, a member of the mustard family, is an annual to short-lived perennial herb that is native to Eurasia. This tap-rooted plant emerges in early spring. The basal rosette of hoary alyssum has oval to lance-shaped leaves that are long-stalked and broader near the tip. Hoary alyssum reaches 2 ½–3 feet tall when mature, standing erect or nearly erect and branching at the top. Stem leaves have smooth margins and are gray-green, alternate, stalkless or nearly so, and taper to a point. A grayish down of star-shaped hairs covers the plant (including seed pods), giving it a silver-gray (or “hoary”) appearance. Flowers of the plant are arranged in clusters at stem ends. Individual flowers are small, white, and have 4 petals that are so deeply lobed that there may appear to be 8. The flowers bloom from spring through fall—a long period during which a single plant can produce over 2,500 seeds—the species’ only means of reproduction. Fruit of the plant consist of oblong seed pods that are flattened, chambered, and positioned close to the stem; each pod contains 4–12 reddish-brown lens-shaped seeds.

Image\_002

The seeds of hoary alyssum are spread by vehicles, equipment, wildlife, human activity, or via contaminated hay. Hoary alyssum is an aggressive invader of areas stressed by environmental influences (e.g., drought, winterkill) or by poor land management (e.g., overgrazing). It displaces native plant species and is particularly adapted to dry, disturbed sites with sandy or gravelly soils and sparse vegetation.

Although the toxicity of hoary alyssum to ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats) is not known, horses are susceptible and have been known to experience symptoms such as fever, diarrhea, edema and laminitis, reportedly upon ingesting a threshold of 30% contaminated forage. Horses can die if they ingest large quantities of the plant.

## Control Methods

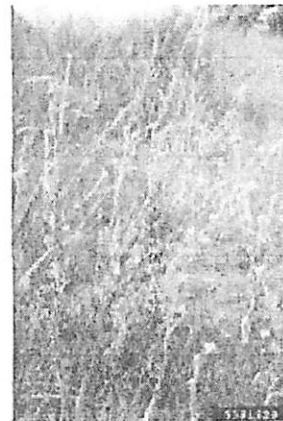
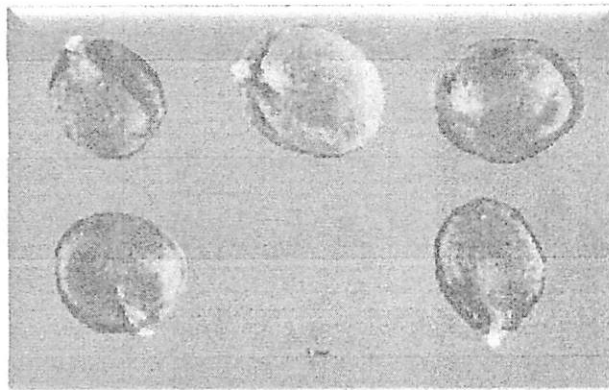


**Cultural:** Hoary alyssum can be suppressed by maintaining healthy plant communities (using strategies such as crop rotations and/or managed grazing, nutrient, and irrigation management) and by reseeding after significant disturbances. Prescribed burns may



also be a feasible control option, although further studies are needed.

**Physical/  
Mechanical:** Small infestations



of hoary alyssum can be hand-pulled or dug out—the entire root system should be removed to prevent resprouting and removal efforts should precede flowering to prevent seed production. Mowing or cutting can prevent the plant from going to seed but may

have to be repeated over the long-term for effective control.

**Chemical:** Hoary alyssum can be controlled using herbicides such as glyphosate, metsulfuron methyl, metsulfuron methyl+aminopyralid and flumioxazin. Retreatment may likely be necessary to kill new plants growing from the seed bank.

More information can be found in the [PNW Weed Management Handbook](#)

**Use pesticides with care.** Apply them only to plants, animals, or sites listed on the label. When mixing and applying pesticides, follow all label precautions to protect yourself and others around you. It is a violation of the law to disregard label directions. Store pesticides in their original containers and keep them out of the reach of children, pets, and livestock.

**Biological:** No biological control agents are available.

Open Letter to The Ravalli County Commissioners  
Ravalli County Weed Board & Department  
Residents of Ravalli County

I'm writing this letter because I feel that if the alyssum weed problem in Ravalli County isn't attacked not only by the weed department, but landowners of the County, the valley's entire hay production is at risk in the very near future.

*Hoary Alyssum: White flowering weeds growing rampant along Ravalli County Roadsides and pastures and is starting to infest its way into hay fields. One single plant can produce 2,500 seeds, stay viable in the ground for 9 years and displaces native species. In horses, ingestion of 30% is enough to cause serious various health issues. Larger ingestion can cause death. Info at: [extension.wsu.edu/whitman/2013/11/hoary-alyssum/](http://extension.wsu.edu/whitman/2013/11/hoary-alyssum/)*

For over 10 years alyssum has been allowed to propagate, unchecked, along the road sides by the Ravalli County Weed Department. It's clear that the weed department is incapable of getting a handle on alyssum on the County road sides. From there it continues to creep into both pastures and hay fields.

Until the County Commissioners insist that the County Weed Department take fast and aggressive action by contracting the spraying out to licensed professional people, in another 5 years, good productive hay fields will be in real jeopardy. As the alyssum continues to comingle in the hay fields, what then?? If alyssum toxicity levels become high enough in the hay, horse owners won't be buying it.

Montana Code Section 7-22-2116; In essence, its unlawful to permit noxious weeds to propagate or go to seed on the persons land. It also states the owner have some sort of weed management program in place. Another portion of that Code is; when property is offered for sale, the person who owns the property shall notify the owner's agent and the purchaser of the existence of noxious weed infestation on the property and that some sort of weed program is in place. It's my understanding that there is a disclosure referring to that in the buy / sell agreement, though I feel that a prospective buyer should be informed up front that the property they are considering has noxious weeds. It would make sense to me to make my property as attractive as I could to a buyer. In the 40 years I've lived here, other than filing a personal complaint, I wonder if any landowner has been cited for harboring noxious weeds? Somehow there must be consequences for landowners allowing noxious weeds to propagate on their land and spill over to the conscientious landowner that works hard to keep their property, neat, tidy and weed free. Personal property rights SHOULD work both ways.

In this upswing of building currently going on in the valley, how often are gravel pits inspected and are fines levied for those with noxious weeds??

Unfortunately, eradicating alyssum is not a one shot deal. Personally, I have been fighting it steadily for over 10 years. I've pulled bags and bags of it, along with untold gallons of spray using a backpack sprayer.. You have to go back every 2 weeks and check again. Mowing only spreads it. It's going to take a huge joint effort of the County and landowners to even begin to get a handle on it. I've talked to the weed department for years about alyssum and gotten nowhere, though I was assured, they were working on it? Thus far, in my travels around the county this summer, I have yet to see one County roadside that's been sprayed.

Please educate yourself about hoary alyssum and contact the Country Weed Department at [cschram@rc.mt.gov](mailto:cschram@rc.mt.gov) and the County Commissioners at 375-6500 or email [gwiles@rc.mt.gov](mailto:gwiles@rc.mt.gov) and insist that something be done.

Linda Habeck

c.c. Ravalli County Commissioners / Ravalli County Weed Board & Department / Board of Realtors  
Bitterroot Stock Growers / Ravalli County Right to Farm and & Ranch  
Bitter Root Land Trust