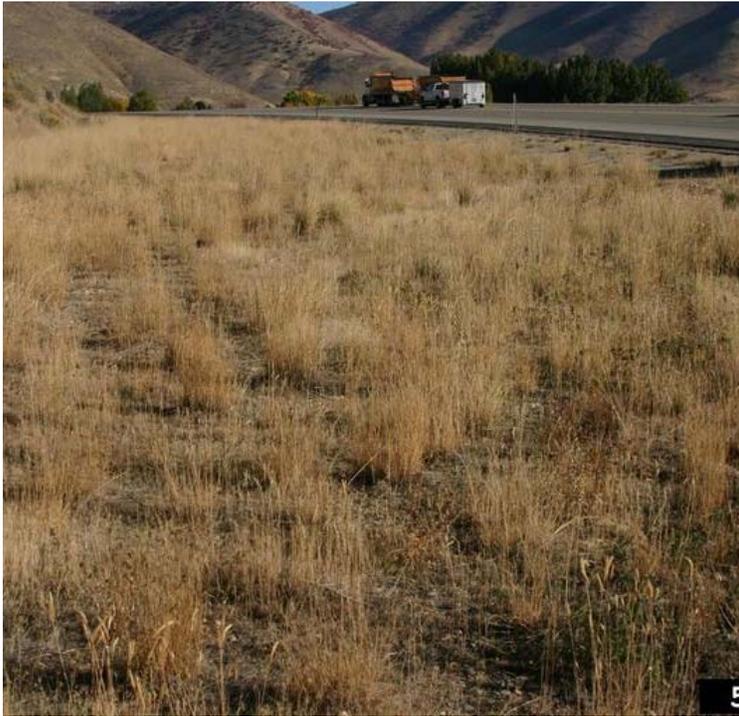




*Taeniatherum caput-medusae* (L.) Nevski, medusahead , Poaceae

Synonyms: *Elymus caput-medusae* L., *Taeniatherum asperum* (Simonk.) Nevski, *Hordelymus caput-medusae* (L.) Pignatti (other synonyms at <https://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?>)



Medusahead infestation. Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org .

### Species Description & Habitat

#### Species Description

Medusahead is a slender annual grass that is 20-60 cm tall and has few leaves and distinctive bristly seed heads. Leaves are narrow. One or more stems arise from the base of the plant and can be as much as half a meter tall. Each stem produces a single, short, spike-type seed head. This species flowers in late spring and early summer. Spikelets have two awns that twist as they dry creating a medusahead appearance. The seed is distributed on fur or clothing.

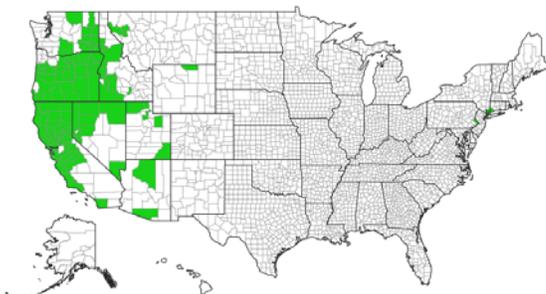
#### Habitat

Medusahead grows in coastal California and the intermountain region of the United States in high clay soils where summers are warm to hot and very low winters temperatures are rare. This species occurs in annual grasslands, oak woodlands and chaparral communities in California and in the

### Introduction and Impact

Medusahead is native to the Mediterranean region. It occurs eastwards in Asia to Kyrgyzstan, and northwards in Europe to Budapest in Hungary. It was likely introduced to the United States in the 1880s in Oregon attached to fur or in bedding of animals imported from Europe.

This species has little value for grazing. It transforms ecosystem to favor its own establishment and growth including accumulating thatch and increasing wildfire frequency. This species decreases native vegetation and biodiversity and jeopardizes threatened species such as sage grouse by reducing habitat.



States where medusahead occurs. EDDMapS. 2018. Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System. The University of Georgia - Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health. Available online at <http://www.eddmaps.org/>; last accessed May 26, 2018.

### Distribution in Introduced Range

In the United States, medusahead has been reported from Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Other areas where this species has been introduced includes the northern and northwestern parts of Europe and in the Americas as well as Chile and Australia.



Medusahead in flower. Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org.



Medusahead awns. Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org.

## Control and Management

There is a range of options to control this species. Prescribed fire in early June has been shown to successfully control medusahead. Heavy grazing during the spring green stage before seed heads form can also be effective. Plant competition using native perennials can help to prevent invasion of native plant communities. Fall application of the herbicide Atrazine has also successfully controlled this species.

## Regulatory Status

This species is listed as a Class C noxious weed in California, Class A noxious weed in Colorado, Noxious weed in Nevada, "B" designated weed and quarantine species in Oregon, and Noxious weed in Utah.

## References and Resources

Bugwood Wiki ([https://wiki.bugwood.org/Taeniatherum\\_caput-medusae](https://wiki.bugwood.org/Taeniatherum_caput-medusae)). Updated 15 January 2014. Accessed 26 May 2018.

Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), Invasive Species Compendium. *Taeniatherum caput-medusae* (medusahead) Datasheet (<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/117419>). Copyright 2018. Accessed 26 May 2018.

Integrated Taxonomic Information System, ITIS (<https://www.itis.gov/>). Accessed 26 May 2018. (Naming convention follows ITIS).

Invasive.org. Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health (<https://www.invasive.org/species/grasses.cfm>).

Invasive Plant Atlas of the United States (<https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=6507>). Updated 22 Oct 2015. Accessed 26 May 2018.

United States Department of Agriculture Plants Database (<https://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=TACA8>). Accessed 26 May 2018.

United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Library. National Invasive Species Information Center (<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/main.shtml>). Updated 29 June 2017.