

PROBLEM VEGETATION IN GRASSLANDS



WHERE DOES THE PROBLEM VEGETATION COME FROM?

When the management of meadows and pastures stops, the grassland can get overgrown with unwanted vegetation. Species that benefit from grazing or mowing are soon out competed by fast growing and nutrient loving species. Even in well-grazed grasslands species that the livestock do not eat can become a problem. In newly restored areas special efforts can be needed during a few years to get to terms with problem vegetation. Likewise, in grasslands where lower grazing pressure or late grazing is applied.

WHICH VEGETATION CAN GIVE PROBLEMS?



NETTLES - *Urtica dioica*

Common nettles can form large stands. They often appear around manure heaps, by feeding places and around piles of sticks and grass, so try to avoid this in pastures. Fresh green nettles are not grazed, but if they have been cut and dried they are eaten by livestock. A few years of continuous cutting the nettles keep, the stands at bay.



MEADOWSWEET - *Filipendula Imaria L.*

In wet areas of pastures meadowsweet can turn up, leading to grass swards breaking up. Meadowsweet is grazed by sheep and goats. Cattle and horses do not eat meadowsweet but their trampling can disturb their growth. Cut the meadowsweet when it is in bloom, repeat when necessary.



CREeping THISTLE - *Cirsium arvense*

Creeping Thistle spreads easily by seed, and has a deep branched root that easily shoots new shoots, so it is hard to exterminate. It often turns up in pastures after extensive cutting of bushes and trees, and is avoided by livestock. Cut off close to the ground level before they bud. Repeat a few times during the growing season during a few years.



BRACKEN - *Pteridium aquilinum (L.) Kuhn*

Bracken is a fern that contains a poison that makes it uneatable for animals. Fight the bracken by snapping off the stalks (let the children fight them with sticks!), repeat during a few years. Trampling disadvantages the bracken, so place a salt or mineral stone in the bracken stand. Avoid burning land with bracken as this benefits its spreading.



ALDER - *Alnus glutinosa*

Be careful when cutting alder in pastures, as shoots spring up around the stump that livestock do not like the taste of. By ring barking shoots are avoided but it can take up to 5 years or more before the trees die and can be felled. Grinding of the stumps is the best alternative, but expensive. High stumps of 1-1,5 meters height, where shoots on the stump is cut after a few years and the whole stump is taken away after another few years, is another alternative. Otherwise make sure that the stumps are cut as close to the ground as possible to make cutting of shoots easier.



ASPEN - *Populus tremula*

Aspen has a substantial root system where one individual often creates a bigger grove of trees. If the largest mother aspen are cut, a lot of new shoots will come up. To reduce the amount of shoots the larger trees should be saved and the younger trees successively thinned out. Sheep, goats and cattle enjoy eating the aspen shoots, so some shoots are usually not a problem. Otherwise new shoots are minimised by ring barking the big trees or high stumps as for alder.



CHEE REDGRASS - *Calamagrostis epigeios*

Chee Redgrass, Canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and other tall grasses often take over in pastures with low grazing intensity, newly restored pastures and pastures grazed by sheep. Root runners create large stands of Chee Redgrass. New shoots in younger plants are grazed while older grass is avoided. The spreading of the grass is limited by the cattle's trampling. It is a good idea to place a salt or mineral stone in the grass stand. If sheep are grazing the grass needs to be cut off manually twice per season.



TUFTED HAIRGRASS - *Deschampsia cespitosa*

Tufted hairgrass and Common rush (*Juncus effusus*) are species that grow in tussocks on wet pastures. They have a high content of silica, which make them untasty. Cattle and horses can graze delicate plants early in the spring. In smaller areas the tussocks can be combated with a brush cutter. Larger areas need to be mowed by a tractor or if the tussocks are very high they need to be grinded down.



REED - *Phragmites australis*

Common reed can be cut off under the water so that their stems are filled with water and rot. Thicker stands with reed can be burnt during the winter, so that the livestock can graze new shoots during the spring. Early grazing with cattle is a good way to get to terms with the reed. Even Icelandic horses can be good at grazing reed.

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