

Community

Invasive weed of the week

By Jeffrey Pettingill

The Enemy

Dalmatian toadflax

The Strategy

The other day Tom, a friend of mine, asked me about this pretty snapdragon-like plant. Most likely an escaped ornamental plant from Europe. This noxious weed is another one of our troublesome plants due to its spreading root system (rhizomes). Dalmatian toadflax is taller in height than its relative, yellow toadflax, growing to a height of 36 inches. It has yellow flowers with a hint of orange on the pedals and has broad leaves that clasp around the stems. The flowers are produced on the upper half of the stems and produce small pods that contain the seeds that will shake or fall out when disturbed.

Attack

Its rhizomes allow the plant to creep into adjacent properties. It is one of the most difficult weeds to contain due to its potential ornamental beauty. Many people do not know it is noxious until it is completely out of hand or we stop by for a visit. It can be seen along the Snake River Road out of Huntington. It is usually found in disturbed soils especially rocky or gravelly locations, which adds to its spreadability as it will be taken up with the soil source and spread to other locations.

Defense

As with the other plants that have a creeping root system, mechanical control is not the first choice. Each time the root is disturbed it



Dalmatian toadflax can grow up to 36 inches high.

promotes stronger regrowth. Numerous herbicides are available. Combinations of Tordon 22k and/or Telar XP work best. Telar XP at 1.5 ounces and Weedmaster will suppress the plant. Treating with a minimum of 30 gallons per acre of water is also key to controlling it. Waiting until the plants are in the bud to bloom stage of growth seems to be the best time for treatment.

There are various insects that are available to help control this toadflax. Assist your local weed professionals by not transporting this weed in soil amendments or by taking this pretty flower home to your mommy!

Jeffrey Pettingill is the weed control supervisor for Baker County. He encourages people with noxious weed questions to call him at 541-523-0618 or 541-519-0204. He also encourages people to like the Baker County Weed District's Facebook page.



Dalmatian toadflax flowers.

DOSES

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The Moderna vaccine comes in vials that hold 10 doses, all of which have to be used within six hours. Staten said health department officials are trying to make sure enough people will be ready to be vaccinated once the vial is opened.

The declining trend in demand for vaccinations was clear on Saturday, April 24, when the county had a free, drive-thru clinic at the Fairgrounds. Although the county had more than 1,100 doses available, just 62 people — three of whom don't live in Oregon — showed up.

The trend prompted the health department to tell state officials that Baker County, for the time being, doesn't need more vaccine doses, Staten said.

For the seven-day period April 22-28, a total of 347 vaccine doses were given in Baker County, according to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

That's down from 516 doses

during the previous seven-day period, April 15-21.

As of Monday, April 26, the health department had 1,100 first doses and 800 second doses of Moderna vaccine, along with about 350 doses of the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, Staten said.

Pharmacies at the Safeway, Albertsons, Bi-Mart and Rite Aid stores in Baker City also are administering vaccines.

Staten said a small number of people who have called the health department regarding vaccines — the phone number is 541-523-8211 — have specifically asked to have the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which requires only one dose.

She said the department has sufficient doses to meet that demand.

The number of county residents being vaccinated has dropped as the percentage of older people, who were eligible earlier, has increased.

As of Thursday, April 29, about 65% of the approximately 3,170 Baker County residents age 70 or older have been fully or partially vaccinated.

Overall, 33% of the county's 16,800 residents have been fully vaccinated (4,463, or 26.6%) or partially vaccinated (1,123, or 6.7%).

Staten pointed out that it's far easier today to get vaccinated than it was a month ago, given the abundance of doses and because everyone 16 and older is eligible.

Only the Pfizer vaccine — which like the Moderna vaccine requires two doses — is approved for 16- and 17-year-olds.

Staten said the health department will have a vaccination clinic next week at the health clinic at Baker High School for students ages 16 or 17. The department has 33 Pfizer doses available, and as of Friday morning about two-thirds of the doses had been spoken for, she said.

(Using the Pfizer vaccine is more complicated because it has to be stored at ultralow temperatures, and the health department lacks the proper freezers, Staten said. The department obtains Pfizer doses from Grande Ronde Hospital in La Grande.)

Baker County case counts

Staten said she's "cautiously optimistic" about the spread of COVID-19 in the county over the past week.

For the seven-day period April 23-29, the county had 24 new cases, compared with 42 new cases for the previous seven-day period, April 16-22, and 57 cases from April 9-15.

"It appears that our case count is down, and I'm hopeful that it will stay low," Staten said.

Despite the trend, Gov. Kate Brown moved 15 of Oregon's 36 counties, including Baker, to the extreme risk level starting Friday, April 30. Those counties will remain at that level, which prohibits

indoor dining at restaurants and bars and severely restricts capacity at some other businesses, through at least May 6.

The governor said the OHA will review the COVID-19 situation in counties weekly rather than every two weeks, as has been the case since December.

Counties could potentially drop out of extreme risk starting May 7, but Staten said that as of Friday the OHA had not given the county details about what thresholds the county would need to meet to qualify to move out of extreme risk.

All counties could drop out of extreme risk if the statewide number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals drops below 300. As of Friday, April 30, there were 334 people hospitalized for treatment of COVID-19, according to OHA.

Police use spike strip to stop car

By Jayson Jacoby
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A Baker City Police officer deployed a spike strip on Wednesday evening, April 28, to stop a car that had led an Oregon State Police trooper on a high-speed chase along Interstate 84 and then onto Highway 86.

Clayton Ted Snell, 36, of Sandy, Utah, was arrested on multiple charges, including driving under the influence of intoxicants, attempting to elude police in a vehicle and on foot, and reckless driving.



Snell

The pursuit started east of Baker City. In a written report, Deputy Gabe Maldonado of the Baker County Sheriff's Office wrote that at about 7:10 p.m. on Wednesday he heard on the radio that OSP Sr. Trooper Andrew McClay was in high-speed pursuit, in the westbound lanes of I-84, of a black SUV with Florida license plates.

McClay notified other officers that the SUV exited the freeway at Campbell Street but became stuck in traffic. The driver then returned to the freeway, still heading westbound.

Baker City Police officer Zach Thatcher saw the black SUV take the next freeway exit near Milepost 302, and then drive east on Highway 86 toward Richland, Maldonado wrote in his report.

Thatcher followed the SUV to about Milepost 7 on Highway 86, where the vehicle turned around and started driving west on the highway, toward the freeway.

Maldonado wrote in his report that he pulled his patrol car off the highway about 7:15 p.m. at the Grey Eagle Mine Road, at the base of Flagstaff Hill.

"A few seconds later I saw the black 2020 Ford Expedition with Florida license plates go by me with a white male adult in the driver seat," Maldonado wrote.

As Maldonado pulled onto the highway behind the Expedition, he wrote that he saw Baker City Police officer Rand Weaver, who was parked beside the highway and had deployed spike strips.

Maldonado wrote that he saw the Expedition's brake lights come on "as it did a quick weaving motion and then continue past Officer Weaver's patrol vehicle."

The deputy followed the Expedition and at about 7:16 p.m. the vehicle crashed at the intersection with Lindley Lane, about a mile and a half west of the Grey Eagle Mine Road.

Maldonado wrote that Snell got out of the vehicle and ran north on Lindley Lane, then through an open gate and toward a cattle truck. Maldonado wrote that the officer with him, Baker County deputy Kyle Ebeling, opened the door and told the man, later identified as Snell, to stop. Snell did so, and the deputies arrested him.

Maldonado wrote that he "could detect a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage coming from Snell's person. Snell would not give me his name, so when I went to the crashed vehicle to look for a wallet, I saw multiple empty cans of beer on the floor and there was alcohol spilled in the vehicle."

Snell was also charged with second-degree criminal mischief. He is scheduled to return to Baker County Circuit Court for a probable cause preliminary hearing on May 6 at 1:15 p.m.

CRACK

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Once a package came to rest, the owner darted out to grab it. After everyone's egg had a turn, the class went inside to see the results.

Kassandra Groves enlisted help to unwrap her box from layer upon layer of clear packaging tape.

She had her doubts about the entire endeavor. "I sure hope there's something in here," she muttered as she unwound more tape.

Inside that box was another box stuffed with bubble wrap.

And inside the bubble wrap was a pristine egg.

"It survived!" she said, drawing a crowd of kindergartners to her table.

Once all the eggs were unwrapped — and laid to rest in the trash can — kindergarten teacher Melissa Garner took a tally of eggs.

Of the 12 tested in this class, five survived.

"Did you have fun watching the drop?" she asked her students.

"Yes!" came the quick answer.

"Did you have fun packaging the egg?"

Again, another "yes!"

"What matters is you had some fun, right?" she said.

Again came the chorus of voices with a "yes!"

New At The Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

FICTION

- "A Bound Heart," Laura Frantz
- "21st Birthday," James Patterson
- "A Touch of Darkness," Scarlett St. Clair

NONFICTION

- "The Hard Crowd," Rachel Kushner
- "The Hero Code," William McRaven
- "Empire of Pain," Patrick Keefe

DVDS

- "Animal Babies" (Documentary)
- "Impractical Jokers" (Comedy)
- "Psycho Goreman" (Horror)



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