

## Johnson Creek Elk study nearing completion

The Johnson Creek elk study began in March of 1982. The project was designed to answer some of the questions regarding cattle-elk forage utilization and competition. The problem, as identified by ranchers throughout most of Eastern Oregon, was that elk and to some extent deer, were utilizing too much of the forage available in the areas used by ranchers for their early-spring grazing.

Initially three study areas were proposed for the project, one each in Wallowa County, Union County and Morrow County. After reviewing all three areas, the Morrow County area, located between Johnson Creek and Butter Creek on the Hughes and French ranches, was selected as the study area.

After the identification of plant types and communities was made, 27 sites were located throughout the study area to sample 9 different plant communities. At each site 80 plots were sampled to determine forage availability and productivity. By using wire cages, each site was divided into four different grazing patterns; 1) no grazing, 2) caged after the elk left the study area, 3) caged until the cattle were turned onto the study area and 4) continuous grazing. Sampling of each plot was accomplished by the use of standard 1-meter range hoops. All

plants within the hoop were clipped and separated into one of five categories: Bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, Sandbergs bluegrass

annual and forbs. The various plants collected were then taken to the Union lab and dried and weighed to determine production and use. After drying and weighing, the plant materials were subjected to lab tests to determine protein content and digestibility.

To determine the diets of the various animals using the study area, fecal collections were made during 10 different collection periods. A total of 1,000 fecal groups were collected and analyzed to determine the actual diets. Also, 7

stomach samples were taken from elk during the spring of 1983.

Additional information regarding the animals use of the study area was collected through the use of 8 time-lapse cameras and several hours of visual observations by field personnel.

According to Dennis Sheehy, project leader, the final report for the study was scheduled for completion by June, 1985. However, due to other schedule changes, the final report will not be completed until later this summer.

## Crop losses caused by weeds in Idaho

By STEVE DEWEY  
Ext Weed Specialist  
Cooperative Extension Service  
Idaho State University

A recent WSSA publication entitled "Crop Losses Due to Weeds in Canada and the United States" provides estimates of average yield losses caused by weeds in 10 geographic areas of the United States. Values represent loss from potential production under current cropping

and weed control practices, and are based on numerous studies and observations made by university research and extension personnel during the period of 1975 through 1979. The following are loss estimates for selected crops in the mountain states.

Crop	Percent Loss from Potential Production
potatoes	7
wheat	13
barley	12
beans	14
corn	13
sugarbeets	20

Using these WSSA yield-loss estimates and crop production figures from the 1983 Idaho Agricultural Statistics Report the following losses can be calculated for Idaho.

Crop	Dollar Loss in Idaho
potatoes	\$24,160,161
wheat	53,021,023
barley	25,201,364
beans	7,432,112
corn	2,913,793
sugarbeets	22,122,855

The total estimated annual loss in Idaho from just these six crops total \$131,851,308.00. The WSSA report did

not provide estimates of losses in hay, pasture or rangeland, but 1980 university estimates of these weed-

related losses in Idaho exceeded \$200 million dollars. When losses to livestock, seed and minor crops are added, as well as weed control costs for waterways, highways and right-of-ways, the total estimated dollar

loss to weeds in Idaho exceeds \$500 million dollars annually. That amount is equivalent to approximately \$530 dollars per Idaho citizen.

Weeds affect everyone, not just the farmer and rancher. Weeds increase production costs, which results in higher food prices. Increased production costs means a

narrower profit margin for agricultural producers, which in turn means less state tax revenue generated and available for essential services such as education and law enforcement. Weeds decrease prop-

erty values, and many dollars are spent each year coping with medical problems caused by weeds (allergies, skin rashes, poisoning). Weeds are invading many of Idaho's scenic recreation areas and may eventually be responsible for substantial economic losses in this major Idaho

industry.

Until the nonagricultural community realizes that weeds seriously impact their lives, and recognizes the importance of supporting weed control efforts in the state, weeds will continue to rob them of millions and millions of dollars every year.

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