

Featured Pest: Foxtail Barley (*Hordeum jubatum*)

Foxtail Barley is a native perennial bunchgrass also known as skunk grass, squirrel-tail, wild barley, and foxtail. It can be found flourishing in pastures, hay fields, ditches, disturbed areas, right-of-ways and in poor crop stands, especially if left uncontrolled. It is tolerant of saline soil but is capable of growth in all soil types. It is most often found in wet soil or depressions but it can tolerate drought-like conditions.



Figure 1. Heads

Biology: A perennial plant with fibrous roots it spreads by primarily by seeds. At maturity the plant can range from 30 – 100 cm in height. Plants are bluish green in colour. Mature plants are dense, have distinctive nodding heads and have long-awned spikes, which can become easily attached to animals, further spreading the weed. Seeds can be spread by livestock, water or equipment. An aggressive “pioneer weed” it will take advantage of bare ground and disturbed sites such as ditch banks.

Tips for control:

- Scout saline areas, fence lines, ditches and fields with a history of cereals and of reduced tillage.
- The shallow, fibrous root system makes it more susceptible to control by tillage than other perennial weeds however; it is often found where tillage is not an option.
- In arable land target with a pre-seed burndown, follow-up with in-crop herbicide to suppress and a fall burndown for best results.

- Maintenance of vigorous ground cover will reduce spread and new infestations.
- Control seedlings before they become established.
- Mow patches to reduce seed set and spread.
- Fall herbicide applications improve control.



Figure 2. Infestation of field originating from ditch

Herbicide Control Options: Arsenal Powerline and glyphosates are non-selective options for TVC applications, or Kerb SC in late fall as a selective control option for ditches and pastures.

Effects On Crop and Forage Quality: Foxtail Barley is palatable to livestock prior to heading. The forward pointing barbs on the awns will cause irritation of the mouth when grazed or consumed in hay. This results in sores of the mouth, nose or eyes when consumed by livestock.

Weed Act Status: It is a noxious weed in Manitoba and a nuisance weed in Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

Herbicide Resistance: Herbicide resistance has not been reported for Foxtail Barley.

Similar Weeds: Squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*) is similar but has two spikelets per node versus three with Foxtail Barley. Foxtail Barley can easily be distinguished from other grasses by its nodding bushy heads.

