

# ask SAM

*Dear Sam,*

*I recently heard some discussion about invasive annual grasses on my local news. How do I know if I have these grasses on my property? And what should I do if I think I'm being invaded?*

*Sincerely,*

*Helen*

**Dear Helen,**

Invasive annual grasses displace native grass populations, reduce grazing value for livestock, and increase the risk of wildfire. The battle against the annual invasive grass cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) has been raging for years now. More recently, self-sustaining populations of ventenata (*Ventenata dubia*) and medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) have been confirmed in north-central and northeast Wyoming. If you live in these parts of the state, keep your eye out for these unwelcome visitors.



1) Cheatgrass, also known as downy brome, can be recognized by its fuzzy leaf blades and gently drooping seed heads that take on a purple tinge when mature.



2) Ventenata has a characteristic metallic golden sheen and open, airy seed head when mature.



3) Medusahead is bright green when young and has a compact seed head with long spikes of two lengths when mature.

Early detection and rapid response (EDRR) methods are an effective tool for management of invasive annual grasses. If you suspect invasive annual grasses on your property, reach out to your local UW Extension office, weed and pest district, or conservation district. Professionals from these organizations can help confirm the identity of the grass and report your case through the Wyoming Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey to alert the proper authorities as needed.

For updates on the latest research conducted by Wyoming's Institute for Managing Annual Grasses Invading Natural Ecosystems (IMAGINE), visit <https://wyagresearch.org/imagine>.

**Additional resources include the following *Barnyards & Backyards* articles.**

- Which Plant and Animal Species are Poised to Become Invasive in Wyoming?: <https://bit.ly/bb-invasives-2019>
- You Can Help Keep Invasive Weeds at Bay: <https://bit.ly/bb-weeds-at-bay>
- Cheatgrass: The ecology, biology, and control of a biological time bomb: <https://bit.ly/bb-cheatgrass>

—Sam

Photos. 1. maria, stock.adobe.com.  
2. John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy, Bugwood.org. 3. Daniel Tekiela