

Washing Vehicles Prevents Weed Spread



What is the situation?

Invasive weed species cause environmental and economic impacts in Montana. It is more cost effective to prevent new weed invasions than control weed infestations that have established. Transport and spread of weeds from vehicles (trucks, cars, ATVs, UTVs, boats) is a concern for landowners and land managers. Two recent Montana State University studies found that once seeds become attached to a vehicle, they can travel hundreds of miles before falling off (see resources below). The studies found:

- More seeds collected on vehicles in the fall than spring: 394 seeds/mile on-trails in the fall vs. 21 seeds/mile in spring.
- A greater number of seeds collected on vehicles off-trail than on-trail.
- More seeds are collected when conditions are wet (14 – 26 times more seeds than dry conditions).
- Tracked vehicles collect more seeds than wheeled vehicles.
- Different types of wheeled vehicles (truck, ATV, UTV) collected a similar number of seeds.
- Most seeds travel 160 miles under dry conditions. Seeds fall off quicker in wet conditions.

Best Management Practices

- Before leaving the office, take time to inspect your gear and remove dirt, plants, and seeds from clothing, boots, gear and vehicles
- Do not ride / drive through weed patches, when possible
- Stay in designated areas

- Start work in the cleanest sites – plan work to start in least weed infested site and finish at most infested site to minimize weed spread
- Wash your ATV / vehicle after every outing to make sure it is clean and free of weed seeds
- Longer duration wash times are more effective (aim for six-minute washes)
- Use commercial portable wash units
- Wash vehicles in a designated or controlled site
- Collect water or monitor the spray area for new weeds
- Inspect, remove, and properly dispose of weed seed and plant parts found on equipment, clothing and vehicles.
- Let the landowner know if you find a new weed infested area so they can control the weed



Clean vehicles in a shop or a designated location outside where you can contain waste water and monitor for new weed infestations. Photo MNWEC.

Additional Resources

Montana NRCS

www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov >
 Topics > Plants and Animals
 > Invasive Species

Montana State University Extension Publications

<https://store.msuextension.org/>

Washing Vehicles to Prevent Weed Seed Dispersal by K. Taylor, F. Pollnac, T. Brummer, J. Mangold, and L. Rew. 2011. Montana State University MontGuide MT201106AG.

Weed Seed Dispersal by Vehicles by K. Taylor, J. Mangold, and L. Rew. 2011. Montana State University MontGuide MT201105AG.

Play, Clean, Go – Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks

<http://playcleango.org/>

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks: Clean. Drain. Dry.

<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/habitat/noxiousWeeds/default.html>

Montana Noxious Weed Education Campaign (MNWEC)

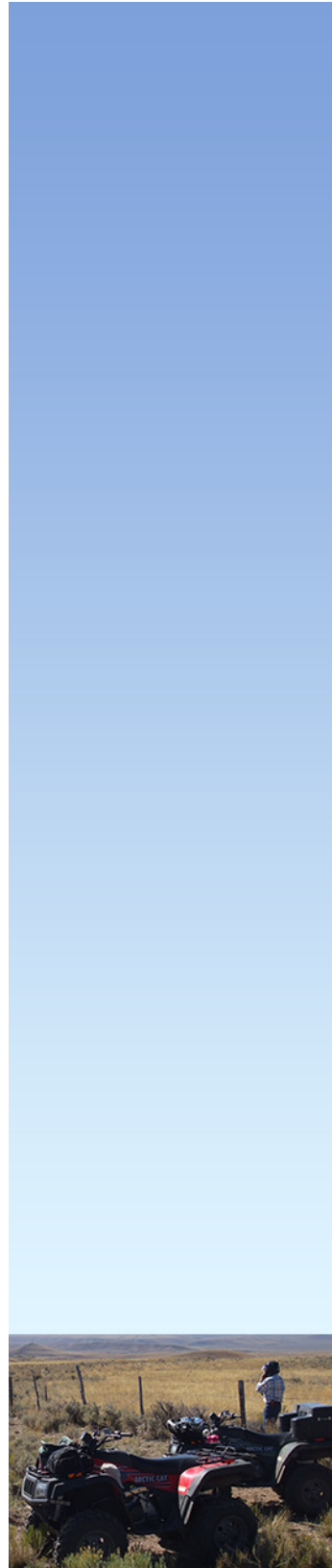
<http://www.weedawareness.org/>



Remove weed seed from clothing and gear, bag the seed, and properly dispose of it to prevent spread. Photo MNWEC.



Thoroughly wash the vehicle, especially areas that hold mud with seed and debris. Longer wash times are more effective for removing weed seed. Photo MNWEC.



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