

GRASS SEED FOR FIRE RE-HAB

The Problem

Grass seed can, and often does, contain the seeds of noxious weeds. Some United States seed suppliers purchase grass seed at bargain prices from weed-infested counties and foreign countries, then sell it to unsuspecting purchasers. When we buy seed for fire re-hab, we're in a hurry, and don't realize until it's too late that we have infested hundreds, sometimes thousands of acres with noxious weeds. (THIS IS A REGION 6 WARNING - VOICE OF EXPERIENCE).

The Solutions

Be sure that the seed you are purchasing or accepting for payment is free of noxious weeds.

1. Before you order the seed, include a purchasing specification stating that the seed must be certified to be free of the noxious weed seeds from weeds listed on "All States Noxious Weeds List." Seed can be Certified for germination rate, and for purity - but neither of these certifications verifies the seed to be free of noxious weeds. **The seed MUST be SAMPLED and TESTED by a Certified Seed Analyst specifically for its weed seed content, then tagged accordingly.** Opened or broken bags can no longer be considered certified.

OR

2. After you buy the seed, have it sampled and tested, by a Certified Seed Analyst, for its weed seed content. Note that the seed analyst must conduct the sampling; we can not send a sample to the laboratory for testing.

HERE IS THE SAME GUIDANCE IN MORE SPECIFIC TERMS:

All seed purchased or otherwise designated or accepted for use on National Forest System Lands, will be required to be tested for "all states noxious weeds" according to AOSA (Association of Official Seed Analysts) standards and will be certified in writing by a Registered Seed Technologist or Seed Analyst as meeting the requirements of the Federal Seed Act and the appropriate State Seed Law for the state in which application is planned to occur, regarding the testing, labeling, sale and transport of prohibited and restricted noxious weeds.

Prior to acceptance of purchased seed, or use of seed by a purchaser, contractor, sub-contractor, cooperator, or by the Forest Service, a sample meeting AOSA standards for sample size and method of acquisition will be submitted to either the Montana State University Seed Testing Laboratory or another seed testing facility for testing by a Registered Seed Technologist or Seed Analyst (as certified through either the AOSA for State and Federal analysts/technologists or the Society of Commercial Seed Technologists for commercial analysts/technologists) for "all states noxious weeds". Only after a finding and documentation in writing of no weed seeds on the "all states noxious weeds" listing in excess of state limitations for prohibited and restricted weed seed will the seed be accepted and used.

Where?

In Oregon: call Tim Butler, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, at (503) 378-4987. Tim is not directly associated with the laboratory, but he can help. Soon, we'll try to establish a clear and direct pathway to the Oregon State University Seed Testing Laboratory for seed testing.

In Washington: call the Washington State Dept. of Agriculture Plant Division, (206) 872-6480. This is not the testing laboratory, but they will help.

In Idaho: Idaho State Seed Laboratory, 2240 Kellogg Lane, Boise, ID. 83712. Phone # 208-334-2368.

In Montana: Montana Seed Testing Laboratory, Plant and Soil Department, Jeon Johnson Hall, Room 710, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana 59717. Phone # 406-994-2141.

Notes:

(1) The testing will cost some money, but not much, and it's worth it. It ranges from \$7 to \$14 per test per lot.

(2) The testing can take time, from two days to several weeks depending upon the current workload.

(3) We often ask for seed mixes, 20% Idaho fescue, 10% orchard grass, etc., and these are almost impossible to purchase as certified batches, and difficult to certify after mixing. If they are found to contain the seeds of noxious weeds, then it is impossible to know whether the source was one grower, the supplier, or the elevator where the seed was mixed, and there's no one to return the seed to.

The above recommendations should be utilized/followed for current emergency fire rehabilitation efforts, to ensure against the spread of invasive non-natives plants species, (Noxious Weeds).

In the future, formalized policy will be provided which provides for use of certified seed for all resource rehabilitation efforts.

The above information was taken from an issue paper developed by David Caraher of Region Six on 8-1-94. It has been modified for use in the Northern Region by Jim Olivarez, Regional Noxious Weed Coordinator.