

## QUACKGRASS



### DESCRIPTION

Quackgrass (*Elymus repens* (L.) Gould) is a cool-season perennial grass introduced from Eurasia. It reproduces by seed and rhizomes. Rhizomes are pale yellow or straw colored, cord-like, about one-eighth inch in diameter, and vary from two to eighteen inches in depth, with new roots and plants emerging from nodes. Stems grow up to three feet tall with three to six joints. Leaves are three to twelve inches long, shiny, dark green, and bear two conspicuous tooth-like projections where the blade joins the stem. The dry lower sheaths, leaves, and stems are distinctly hairy; upper sheaths are hairless or nearly so. Tiny, wind-pollinated flowers are borne in groups of four to seven, subtended by two unawned or short-awned glumes (each group is called a spikelet). Spikelets are flattened and mostly solitary at each node along a two to four-inch terminal spike. The grains are slender and about one-quarter inch long. Flowering occurs from June until August, and fruiting occurs from July until October.

Sources: Kansas Department of Agriculture, K.A.R. 4-8-35, Revised May 20, 2020  
Photos: DoMyOwn Staff Article: *Quackgrass*; Quincy D. Law, Purdue University; AdobeStock\_478201597-1

## **PREVENTION OF SPREAD**

The Kansas Noxious Weed Law (K.S.A. 2-1313a et. seq.) requires all landowners to control the spread of and to eradicate quackgrass on all lands owned or supervised by them. Methods used for control must both prevent the production of viable seed and destroy the plant's ability to reproduce by vegetative means. Infestation sites must be monitored after control methods have been implemented to ensure that dormant seeds in the seedbank do not germinate and establish new infestations.

## **QUACKGRASS CONTROL PRACTICES**

Quackgrass control means that both the roots and the flowers must be destroyed. Because quackgrass is a perennial, two or more of the control methods discussed herein must be used together to control quackgrass, with the exception that herbicide applications may be used alone as a control.

### **Cultural Control**

Cultural weed control involves land and vegetation management techniques used to prevent the establishment or control the spread of noxious weeds.

Cattle and horses readily feed on quackgrass, but populations are only suppressed, and rarely eradicated, even with intensive grazing. Intensively grazing to two inches or less will reduce the dominance of quackgrass in an area. Horses and cattle enjoy eating rhizomes, and pigs will root through the soil to find them.

Frequent surveys of fence lines, roadways, ditches, and other susceptible areas for new infestations and the timely removal of any new plants will prevent quackgrass from becoming established.

### **Mechanical Control**

Mechanical weed control involves the physical removal of weeds or the reproductive parts of weeds.

As a perennial species, quackgrass is difficult to control mechanically. Repeated tillage, at least four inches deep and beginning in the hottest and driest part of the summer, should suppress infestations. Tillage will separate rhizome buds from their parent plants and cause them to sprout, so it must be repeated throughout the season, whenever the new plants put out three leaves, to prevent the development of any new rhizomes. This tillage must be repeated annually for good control. It is important to clean roots and root fragments from equipment before entering uninfested areas of the field or other fields to prevent the spread of quackgrass. It is also not practical to clean cultivate over a two-year period because of the resulting wind and water erosion or loss of income due to lack of crop returns. Following a sequence of repeated tillage throughout the summer, a fall cover crop should be planted at a seeding rate of two to two-and-a-half bushels per acre.

### **Chemical Control**

The herbicides listed below may be used for cost-share with landowners to control quackgrass. Other products labeled and registered for use on this noxious weed in Kansas may be used in accordance with label directions but are not available for cost-share. Be sure to follow all label directions and precautions. For additional information consult the most recent edition of the Kansas State University publication of "Chemical Weed Control for Field Crops, Pastures, Rangeland, and Noncropland."

Any two or more of the herbicides listed below may be available for cost-share as a pre-mix or a tank mix if allowed on the respective labels. Contact your county weed program for availability.

Switching often between herbicides with different modes of action is highly recommended.

<b>Herbicide</b>	<b>Mode of Action</b>
diquat	22
fluazifop-p-butyl	1
glyphosate	9
nicosulfuron	2
sethoxydim	1
sulfosulfuron	2

### **Biological Control**

Biological control refers to the deliberate application of a living organism to control the spread of weeds. These agents will not eradicate their host plant; therefore, other control methods must be used in addition to the use of biological control agents as part of an integrated pest management strategy. The importation of biological control agents is regulated by USDA-APHIS and is allowed by permit only.

There are no biological control agents available for quackgrass.