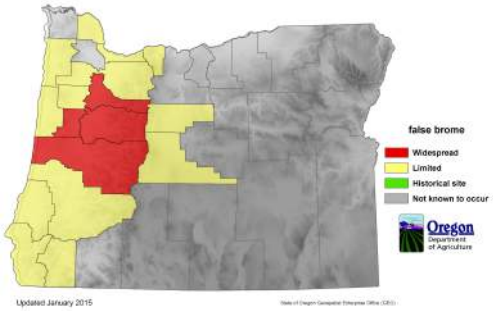
# "B" Rated Weeds

**A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties**

**False brome**
*Brachypodium sylvaticum*

**Other common names:** Slender false brome

**USDA symbol:** BRSY
**ODA rating:** B




**Introduction:** False brome is native to Europe, Asia and North Africa, but is invading habitats in western Oregon, and elsewhere in our region at an alarming rate. The earliest record of the species in North America is a 1939 collection near Eugene in Lane County. By 1966, the species spread through intentional introductions in the Corvallis-Albany area of Benton County and on the Willamette National Forest where it has become naturalized. Logging equipment is the most active dispersal agent in forested regions.

**Distribution in Oregon**: Oregon is the epicenter of false brome in the U.S. with smaller outbreaks in California and Washington. Limited evidence suggests that false brome can also survive in the drier colder portions of Oregon. The Klamath, Ochoco, Blue Mountains and Siskiyou mountains may all be susceptible at specific locations.

**Description:** This attractive perennial grass forms bunches of lime-green leaf blades. Leaf color is bright green throughout the growing season turning bleached white during the winter, a strong indicator of false brome. Leaf margins and lower stems are hairy with no red streaking on the stems. Flowers and seeds are spiked and droopy with no stalks. False brome appears to be self-fertile producing few to a couple hundred seeds per plant. Isolated plants are observed to produce viable seeds becoming new weed epicenters complicating control efforts. Seed movement is by wildlife with both birds and small mammals transporting seeds. Long-distance dispersal is predominantly through logging activities, roadside maintenance equipment and recreational activities within infested areas.

**Impacts:** False brome can quickly become the dominant plant species in forest understories, demonstrating great shade and drought tolerance. It is able to grow in a wide variety of habitats and competes strongly for early season moisture. Its presence in commercial timberlands creates a perfect environment for rodents causing young tree damage. It can dominate oak savannah habitats and can be expected to severely restrict native oak regeneration. While herbicides control the grass on private timberlands, the same cannot be said of public lands where such use is restricted. A secondary economic concern may involve false brome toxicity to livestock. The endophyte fungus *Epichloe sylvatica* has been identified in North American false brome populations. Existence of endophyte fungi in forage grasses has been linked to negative health defects in sheep and other livestock. Currently, no false brome pastures have been identified in Oregon but the threat may surface in the future.

**Biological controls**: No approved biological control agents are available.

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www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Pages/Default.aspx

*Photos by Glenn Miller, ODA*