

“B” Rated Weeds

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

Ventenata grass
Ventenata dubia

Other common names: Voodoo grass, North African grass and wire grass.

USDA symbol: VEDU
ODA rating: B



Introduction: *Ventenata dubia* is native to southern Europe, western Asia and northern Africa. *Ventenata* grass is a relatively new invader in the Pacific Northwest with the first confirmed siting in 1952 in Washington State. Since that initial siting, the plant has rapidly increased its range throughout the West including most counties in Oregon. *Ventenata* invades habitats similar to Medusahead rye and cheatgrass but thrives better in slightly wetter conditions enabling it to include western Oregon in its ecological range. Rich in silica, the grass provides very poor forage, contaminates valuable timothy hay crops, reduces small grain yields, reduces rangeland productivity and out-competes most other native and non-native grasses in its optimum ecological zone.

Distribution in Oregon: *Ventenata* is known to exist in most counties in Oregon. In Western Oregon, it is abundant in the landscape and is found growing on right-of-ways, dry foothills, log landings and disturbed landscapes though it is thought to be poorly competitive in healthy west-side ecosystems. In Grant County and other Blue Mountain counties, *Ventenata* has often first appeared in ponderosa pine forestland, later moving out into more arid rangeland. Harney, Lake and Malheur Counties report *Ventenata* is increasing and dominating medusahead sites. Initial colonies establish in ditches and low-lying areas that receive additional moisture from snow accumulation and runoff and from these areas, the grass spreads out into the dryer rangeland.

Description: *Ventenata* is a winter annual that germinates in the fall when temperatures are 64°- 82° F). Seed heads are produced May through June, about one month later than cheat grass and two weeks following medusahead rye. The plant has slim, erect culms, characteristic reddish-black nodes, and grows from 4 to 18 inches tall. The culms sport microscopic hairs that give the stem the appearance of being smooth. Seedling leaves are in-rolled or lengthwise folded and appear very narrow. Leaf ligules are long ranging from 1-8 mm in length. The leaves contain very little biomass, offering scant forage to herbivores.

Impacts: *Ventenata*'s expansion in recent years to areas of sparse vegetation within the Blue Mountain Eco-region have significantly altered fire behavior. *Ventenata* is directly impacting the production and value of forage in the Pacific Northwest. Damage to Timothy hay, an important export crop can be particularly costly. The stand life for hay such as brome, timothy and bluegrass is reduced, from eight to ten years to four or five years. *Ventenata* damage to bunchgrass pastures is worse than for seeded pastures, with a 50% to 75% average reduction in the stand.

Biological controls: No bio control is available for *Ventenata* grass.

