

Please call 1-866-invader if you suspect you have found this species

Smooth distaff thistle
Carthamus baeticus

Other common names:

USDA symbol: CALAB2
ODA rating: A



Introduction: Smooth distaff thistle was introduced from the Mediterranean region. It is similar in appearance to safflower and other distaff species. This and other distaff species have the potential to be the worst thistle species in Oregon, should it escape detection and spread. Fortunately, active early detection and treatments are in place to prevent this from occurring.

Distribution in Oregon: This species is not yet known to occur in Oregon

Impacts: Smooth distaff thistle is highly competitive with cereal crops and desirable rangeland species. Dense infestation can reduce yields, clog harvesting equipment, and increase seed cleaning cost. Grazing animals will avoid them for more palatable species, resulting in rapid increase in thistle populations and decrease in desirable plant species. In over grazed fields, the thistle spiny nature can injure the eyes and mouths of livestock forced to graze within dense populations of the weeds.

Description: This thistle is a winter annual that flowers in July to August. It grows up to four feet tall. Smooth distaff is very similar to woolly distaff thistle except that it has a smaller pappus, is less hairy, and the seedling leaves are more deeply lobed. Stems of smooth distaff are white to straw-colored, usually sparsely covered with woolly and minutes glandular hairs, especially at the bases of flower heads. Stems often persist through winter, longer than most other thistles. Flower bracts and seeds remains in old flower heads that can help with species identification. They prefer disturbed, open sites of grasslands, pastures, and agricultural lands, especially grain fields. Inhabits many soil types. Most seeds disperse passively near the parent plant, but some remain in the seed heads that are then spread by animals and machinery. Seeds are viable for up to 8 years under field conditions.

Biological controls: Biological control agents are not used on "A" listed weeds in Oregon. If this weed is found in the state it will be managed for eradication or containment.

