

"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

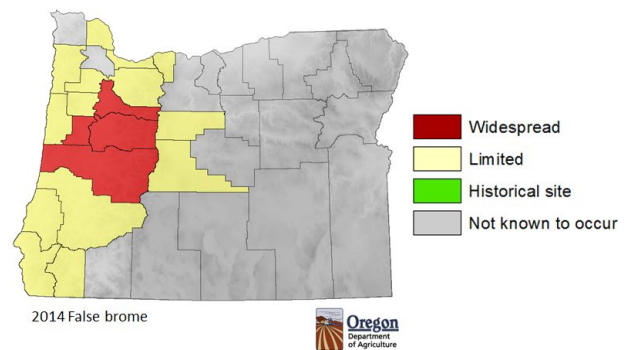
USDA symbol: BRSY

ODA rating: B



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

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 from near Eugene in Lane County. By 1966, the species grew in two large colonies in the Corvallis-Albany area of Benton County where it has naturalized.



Description: A perennial grass that forms short "squatty" bunches. Stems are hollow with broad, flat lax leaves and a leaf sheath open to the base. Leaf is bright green that often remains through fall and part of winter. Leaf margins and lower stems are hairy. Flowers are spiked that droops noticeably, and spikelets have short or 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 and become 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 that damage tree seedlings. It can dominate oak savannah habitats and can be expected to severely restrict native oak regeneration. Many acres of private timberland receive initial herbicide treatments to remove grass and other vegetation regardless if they are brome infested or not, therefore, no additional costs are attributed to false brome. The same cannot be said of public lands and it is on these where the greatest potential for economic harm exists. 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 increase in the future.

Biological controls: No approved biological control agents are available at this time.

