Holcus lanatus L.

Common velvetgrass

Family: Poaceae
Range: Most of the western U.S. except Wyoming and South Dakota.
Habitat: Roadsides, disturbed grassland, cultivated fields, and orchards. Often found on soils with low fertility. Some biotypes of common velvetgrass tolerate high salt concentrations. Grows best under moist conditions, but established plants tolerate moderate drought. A facultative wetland indicator species in California and some other western states. It does not survive a period of severe frost.
Origin: Native to Europe.
Impact: Dense populations of common velvetgrass have been shown to reduce the establishment of native species and the growth of tree seedlings. This species rapidly colonizes disturbed areas, where it out competes native species for soil moisture and nutrients, especially in nutrient-limited substrates. The accumulation of litter can prevent the germination of native grasses and increase risk of fire. In California, common velvetgrass is particularly invasive in coastal grasslands and wetlands in the northern part of the state. Common velvetgrass provides food for game birds, deer, elk, and insects.
California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) Inventory: Moderate Invasiveness

Common velvetgrass is a tufted perennial typically 2 to 3 ft tall, with soft pubescent, grey-green foliage. The stems are ascending to erect and slightly flattened in cross-section. The foliage, including internodes, are moderately to densely covered with long grayish hairs. The roots are fibrous and deep, especially in low-nitrogen soil. Individual clumps enlarge rapidly by adding shoots and roots at the nodes. The ligules are membranous, 1 to 2 mm long.

The inflorescence consists of an open to contracted panicle, 2 to 6 inches long. It is covered with short, velvety, gray hairs, and often is purplish-tinged. Plants reproduce by seed, most of which fall below the parent plant, but which can be dispersed long distances by water. Seed production is typically high. Seeds can germinate immediately, or they can build up a large soil seedbank; deeply buried seeds can survive for up to 10 years.

NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL

Mechanical (pulling, cutting, disking)	Hand pulling of plants can reduce populations, and removing inflorescences can contain population expansion, but common velvetgrass can resprout from basal shoots following the removal of the above-ground growth. It is important to remove the entire plant. Common velvetgrass is easier to control with hand pulling compared to more rhizomatous perennial species. Mowing and tillage can reduce infestations of common velvetgrass, but are generally impractical in areas where infestations occur. In some cases, mowing and cutting can stimulate regrowth and flower production and increase the reproductive potential of common velvetgrass. Seeds are easily spread by mowing equipment.
Cultural	Intensive grazing may reduce infestations of common velvetgrass, but occasional low intensity grazing may enhance establishment and spread. Burning can decrease populations, but is not practical in most situations. Long-term flooding can eradicate common velvetgrass, while elimination of irrigation can reduce its abundance.

Biological	There are no biological control agents available for the control of common velvetgrass.

CHEMICAL CONTROL

The following specific use information is based on published papers and reports by researchers and land managers. Other trade names may be available, and other compounds also are labeled for this weed. Directions for use may vary between brands; see label before use. Herbicides are listed by mode of action and then alphabetically. The order of herbicide listing is not reflective of the order of efficacy or preference.

LIPID SYNTHESIS INHIBITORS	
Fluazifop *Fusilade*	**Rate:** 1 to 1.5 pt product/acre (4 to 6 oz a.e/acre) **Timing:** Postemergence in early spring when grass is rapidly growing. **Remarks:** Fluazifop is a grass herbicide and will not injure broadleaf species. Repeat applications may be needed to control well-established populations. Add 1% crop oil concentrate or 0.25% non-ionic surfactant.
Sethoxydim *Poast*	**Rate:** 1 to 2.5 pt product/acre (3 to7.5 oz a.e./acre) **Timing:** Apply in early spring when grass is rapidly growing. Applying in mid- to late spring may be less effective. **Remarks:** Sethoxydim is a grass herbicide and will not injure broadleaf species. Repeat applications may be needed to control well-established grass. Add 1% crop oil concentrate or 0.25% non-ionic surfactant. It is possible that clethodim may also provide good control, although there is no evidence for this yet.
PHOTOSYNTHETIC INHIBITORS	
Hexazinone *Velpar L*	**Rate:** 2 to 6 pt product/acre (0.5 to 1.5 lb a.i./acre) **Timing:** Preemergence or postemergence to rapidly growing plants. **Remarks:** Hexazinone is a broad-spectrum herbicide that is mobile in the soil and has long soil residual activity. It should not be used in areas with a shallow water table. Because common velvetgrass is typically found in wet areas, hexazinone is not the best choice under most circumstances. High rates of hexazinone can create bare ground, so only use high rates in spot treatments.

RECOMMENDED CITATION: DiTomaso, J.M., G.B. Kyser et al. 2013. *Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States*. Weed Research and Information Center, University of California. 544 pp.