

Ventenata (*Ventenata dubia*)



Pamela Scheinost, USDA-NRCS

Identification Ventenata is a winter annual grass native to southern Europe, western Asia and northern Africa. It is also known as wiregrass or North Africa grass. Ventenata is typically 6 to 27 inches tall with leaves that are rolled lengthways or folded. It has open sheaths, and the inflorescence is more or less lax, open, and pyramidal in shape (photo right). The color of ventenata has been described as tawny to light yellow. Grass identification can be difficult for many people, so look for these key characteristics on ventenata: reddish-black nodes in May-June (photo left); unusually long, membranous ligule (1-8mm) (photo left); distinct shiny appearance and open panicle in June-July; and lower awns that are straight and upper awns that are twisted and bent once the plant senesces in July-August (photo bottom right).



Habitat Ventenata has been found along roadsides and in hay, pasture, range and CRP fields in the western U.S. (photo bottom left). It was first reported in the U.S. in Washington and Idaho in the 1950s. Ventenata is most common on south-facing hillsides with shallow, rocky, clay or clay-loam soils. It is increasingly receiving attention due to its rate of spread and difficulty to control. There are anecdotal reports from Washington and Idaho of ventenata displacing other invasive annual grasses like cheatgrass and medusahead.

Spread Spread occurs primarily through contaminated grass seed, hay and annual crops. The long awns likely assist in dispersal by sticking to humans and animals.

Management Priorities Ventenata is not listed as a noxious weed in any state or Canadian province, but it is increasingly problematic in eastern Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Information on management is limited, especially for range and pasture settings. First and foremost, maintaining healthy grassland plant communities and limiting disturbance can help to prevent ventenata from establishing. Mowing multiple times during the growing season can be effective. However, mowing once during heading does not work as the plant bends over and becomes tangled in the mower, and plants mowed prior to heading may produce another flush of seeds if soil moisture is adequate. Ventenata has flourished following fire in Oregon; in Idaho, fire suppressed ventenata but tended to stimulate annual weedy bromes and left an opening for more ventenata the following year. The plant is



Matt Lavin, Montana State University

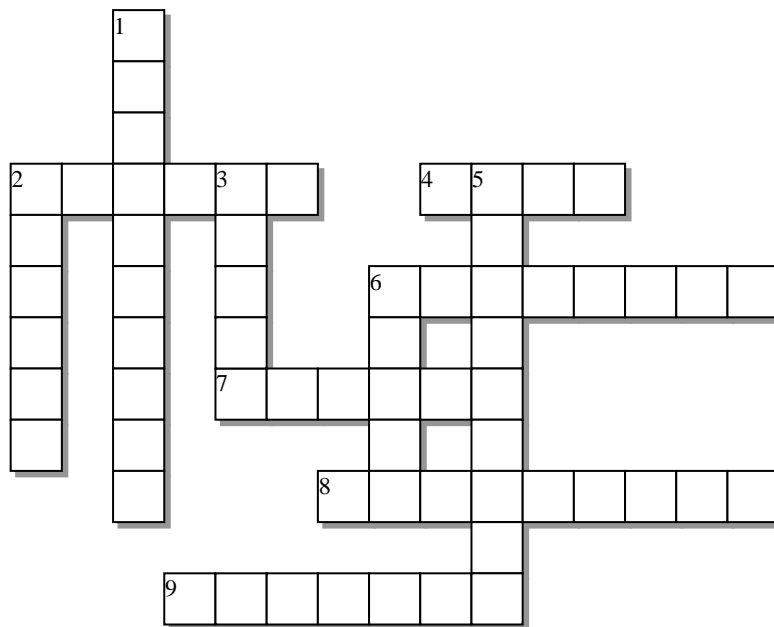
unpalatable once panicles appear, so grazing as a management option is limited to early spring. Herbicides labeled for control of ventenata in pasture, range and CRP are limited because ventenata is such a recent issue. Imazapic applied in the fall to semi-dormant perennial grass stands has been effective, particularly when ventenata comprised more than 25% of vegetative cover. Furthermore, imazapic applied in the fall followed by an application of nitrogen fertilizer in the spring and fall of the next year has shown promise as fertilizer can help perennial grasses recover from herbicide damage and be more competitive. A study in Washington found that a spring application of imazapic was more effective than a fall application.



Matt Lavin, Montana State University

Much of the information presented here can be found in a USDA-NRCS plant guide on ventenata (http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_vedu.pdf) and a Washington State University Extension bulletin (<http://county.wsu.edu/whitman/agriculture/plants/weeds/Documents/VentenataEB2040Epdf.pdf>).

Test your knowledge of Ventenata



Across:

- 2 - Ventenata was named after a French professor of this science in the late 1700s*
- 4 - Come on baby, let's bend and twist! These features on the seeds may assist with long-distance dispersal
- 6 - The uppermost awns are bent, while the lowermost are _____
- 7 - A Washington study found imazapic was more effective on ventenata when applied in this season
- 8 - The shape or outline of the inflorescence of ventenata can be described as this
- 9 - Ventenata has an unusually long and membranous one of these

Down:

- 1 - One study found that an application of this after spraying ventenata increased control
- 2 - Seeds of ventenata are produced about one month later than invasive annual grasses in this genus (now don't 'cheat' and look at the answer!)*
- 3 - These are reddish-black and a distinguishing feature of ventenata
- 5 - Another common name for ventenata
- 6 - The surface of ventenata foliage has a distinct _____ appearance

*Refer to USDA-NRCS plant guide or Washington State University Extension bulletin for answer

Solutions are posted to the MSU Extension Invasive Rangeland Weed website:

<http://www.msuextension.org/invasiveplantsMangold/extensionsub.html>

