

Certified Weed Free Forage and Straw

A Fact Sheet for Consumers

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What are certified weed free products?

Certified weed free forage (hay) and straw are products that have been inspected and do not contain the seeds, and other reproductive parts, of specific weed species. In BC, fields are inspected for species listed under the *Weed Control Act* of BC and the *Forest Range and Practices Act (FRPA)* using standards developed by the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA).

Why use certified weed free products?

- Weed infested forage and mulch crops can spread those weed species into areas where the forage or mulch is used, e.g. trails, roadsides and reclamation sites. By using Certified weed free products you can help prevent the introduction of these destructive invasive species.
- The BC Weed Control Act imposes a duty on all land occupiers to control specific invasive species (noxious weeds). The purpose of the Act is to protect our natural resources and industry from the negative impacts of invasive plants.
- FRPA stipulates that a person carrying out forestry or range activities on crown land must take steps to prevent the introduction or spread of designated invasive plants resulting from their activities.



Reclamation Using Certified Weed Free Straw

Industrial development is often followed by reclamation of the disturbed areas. Reclamation often includes establishing vegetation compatible with the intended land use and the presence of invasive species can derail this reclamation process (Alberta Environment 2003). The use of Certified Weed Free products can be part of a successful reclamation process.

Mulching with straw involves placing a layer of straw over bare soil and then either incorporating it into the soil with a studded roller or anchoring it with a tackifier (CSQA 2003, Salix and Geosyntec 2007). Mulching can be done immediately after seeding (Coulter and Halladay 1997). Straw mulch protects the soil surface from wind and rain erosion, reduces velocity of overland water flow and increases infiltration (Coulter and Halladay 1997, Salix and Geosyntec 2007). Straw mulch can be used in combination with temporary or permanent seeding strategies to improve plant establishment by increasing available moisture and providing insulation against temperature extremes (CSQA 2003, Salix and Geosyntec 2007).

Straw bale dikes are temporary barriers to slow water movement and trap

Where can I get certified weed free products?

Contact the Weed Free Forage and Straw Program. They will put you in touch with local growers who are enrolled in the certification program. The best way to ensure that weed free products will be available when you need them is to contact a grower before the growing season starts to make sure the right type and quantity of products are available for your needs.



How will I know that the forage or straw I buy has been certified as weed free?

Certified products are labeled with a certification tag and/or special coloured twine.

How much do certified weed free products cost?

The cost of weed free products varies greatly from place to place and from year to year. Contacting a grower will allow you to negotiate a price that is acceptable to both you both. Growers pay fees to participate in the certification program.

Best Practices to Prevent the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Plants

- Start feeding your animals Certified Weed Free Forage 48 hours before heading into the backcountry. Before leaving home thoroughly brush and clean hooves to remove seeds from your animals.
- Seeds can hitch-hike on equipment, recreation vehicles, trucks, and people. Thoroughly clean all gear and machines before heading into the backcountry or into industrial development sites.
- Immediately re-vegetate disturbed soils to prevent weed establishment – use weed free seed and mulch!
- Report invasive plant infestations to your local invasive plant committee.

small amounts of sediment transported by runoff across a slope. Straw bale dikes pond water and allow sediment to settle out (Salix and Geosyntec 2007).

Certified Weed Free straw will help ensure erosion and sediment control methods and structures contribute to the success of reclamation projects instead of contaminating sites with invasive plants (Alberta Environment 2003, Coulter and Halladay 1997, CSQA 2003, Salix and Geosyntec 2007).

References

- Alberta Environment. 2003. Weeds on Industrial Development Sites. Alberta Government.
- California Stormwater Quality Association. 2003. Stormwater Best Management Practice Construction Handbook.
- Coulter, T.S., and D.R. Halladay. 1997. Manual of Control of Erosion and Shallow Slope Movement. Vancouver Island Highway Project, Thurber Environmental Consultants. Ministry of Transportation.
- Salix Applied Earthcare and Geosyntec Consultants. 2007. OHV BMP Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control. California Department of Parks and Recreation.

For additional information please contact:

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BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Invasive Plant Program for information & Report-A-Weed web-tool. www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/Plants/index.htm

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Weed Free Forage and Straw Working Group Members:

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