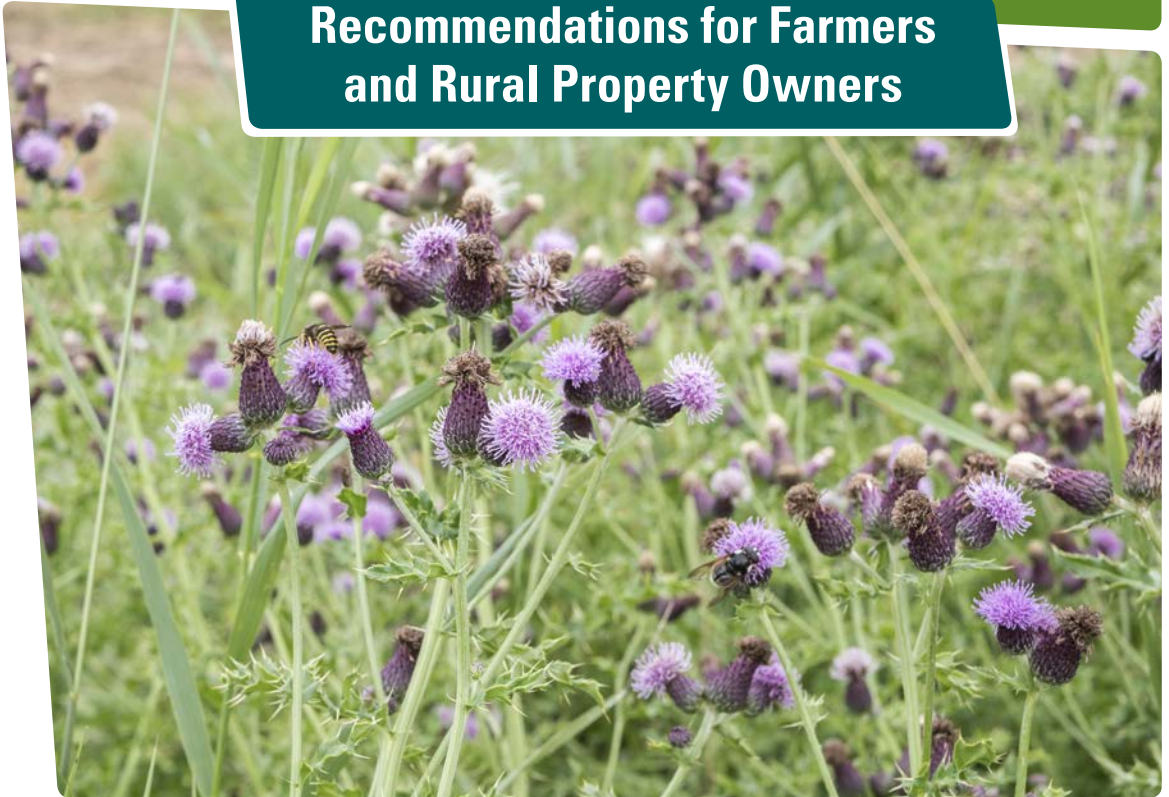


# Keeping Yukon Natural

## Recommendations for Farmers and Rural Property Owners



Creeping thistle is a deep-rooted perennial plant with purple flowers and dark green, spiny leaves. Photo: Andrea Altherr

### What's the problem?

**Invasive species are non-native species that have the potential to cause undesirable or detrimental impacts on people, animals, or the ecosystem. These species often reproduce quickly and are very persistent. Most non-native species introduced into the Yukon will not become invasive due to their inability to adapt to the cold climate and poor soil nutrient conditions. However, invasive species that do become established often excel in these conditions due to their ability to outcompete boreal species. A high presence of invasive species can lead to loss of habitat for rare and endangered species. Changing climatic conditions in the North such as warmer winters and wetter summers may further increase the extent and rate of spread of invasive species.**

Preventing the establishment of invasive species can have many direct benefits for Yukon farmers. In southern Canada invasive

species are one of the biggest threats to the economy and productivity of farming businesses as their presence leads to a direct reduction in crop yields. Invasive species crowd out and outcompete crop plants, consuming nutrients and water resources that have been allocated to crops, ultimately increasing resource consumption and production costs.

Many invasive species will form stands of monocultures in pastures and rangelands. These monocultures lead to a reduction in the variety of feed available. Livestock will often avoid patches of invasive species, as many species are unpalatable or toxic, increasing grazing pressure on forage crops.

### Best practices for farmers and rural property owners

Creating a weed management plan and reacting quickly to new infestations is

essential in limiting the spread of invasive species. Farmers can limit the spread and establishment of invasive species on rangeland and pastures through a wide range of prevention and suppression techniques.

## PREVENTION

- Weeds can only exist if there is space for them. Sow seeds at a higher rate to limit the amount of space available for weeds to establish.
- Aim to shade and crowd out young weed seedling through crop rotation, maintaining good soil fertilization, and appropriate soil moisture conditions.
- If possible employ rotational grazing to avoid overgrazing. Overgrazing leads to soil compaction and creation of bare surfaces. These areas are ideal habitats for weeds to invade.

## EARLY DETECTION AND REMOVAL

- Regular monitoring inspections for the presence of undesirable species is critical in preventing establishment of weed patches.
- Take advantage of YISC's [Walk Your Field Program](#). We can help identify invasive species and design a management plan for controlling weeds.

## CONTROL

- Be a good neighbour. Controlling invasive plants in fence rows and ditches can reduce the spread into nearby rangelands and pastures.
- Contact the Yukon Agriculture Branch for information on species-specific management techniques: [agriculture@gov.yk.ca](mailto:agriculture@gov.yk.ca) or call 867.667.5838

*Prevention is the most cost-effective way of dealing with weeds!*

Perennial sow-thistle is found along road sides and can rapidly move into farm fields where it reduces crop and forage quality.

Photo: Andrea Altherr



## Two examples of invasive species to look for in your field

### Creeping thistle

*Cirsium arvense*

Left unchecked this plant can grow up to 1.5 metres in height and will form extensive clonal colonies from underground root systems. Creeping thistle is commonly found along roadsides, in cultivated fields and pastures, and other disturbed areas. Thickets of thistle crowd out forage grasses, easily outcompeting the grasses for water and soil nutrients, reducing crop yield productivity. Management of creeping thistle is most effective when completed prior to the plant flowering. Regular cutting and tilling can help wear down plant energy reserves and limit population growth, but are not likely to eliminate infestations completely.

Narrowleaf Hawksbeard is a prolific seed producer that, once established, is hard to remove. Photo: Andrea Altherr

### Narrowleaf Hawksbeard

*Crepis tectorum*

Narrowleaf hawksbeard is a tall annual plant with dandelion-like flower heads. It will readily colonize disturbed areas such as corrals, watering stations, and overgrazed fields. Each plant is capable of producing over 40,000 seeds which spread easily through wind dispersal. Once established, narrowleaf hawksbeard can form highly dense patches which displaces native plants. The seeds can adhere to clothing, shoes, and tires. Farmers can prevent establishment of narrowleaf hawksbeard by removing plants from high-use areas before they form colonies and limiting the amount of grazing in a single area.



## Keeping Yukon Natural

Report invasive species to [info@yukoninvasives.com](mailto:info@yukoninvasives.com) OR use the reporting form at [www.yukoninvasive.com](http://www.yukoninvasive.com) OR submit your observation to [www.iNaturalist.org](http://www.iNaturalist.org)

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