

St. Johnswort

Hypericum perforatum

Also known as goatweed or Klamath weed, this plant dominated Asotin County range lands in the 1950's. Thanks to the introduction of the Klamath beetle (*Chrysolina* sp) populations of St. Johnswort have been significantly reduced. However, as with any biological control, a certain 'fox and rabbit' fluctuation occurs. When the 'rabbit' population is high, all of the 'fox pups' live creating a population explosion of 'foxes'. In the following years they reduce the 'rabbit' population by predation. When very few 'rabbits' are left, the 'fox' population subsequently crashes. Simply put, so goes the fox and rabbit and so goes the Klamath beetle and St. Johnswort.

Populations of St. Johnswort are not controlled equally by the Klamath beetle. There are some populations in the Pacific Northwest that are still expanding and other populations that have seen little change. However, Asotin County, in general, saw a dramatic reduction of St. Johnswort after the introduction of the Klamath beetle.

For the last 5 years, St. Johnswort has been slowly increasing its population size (especially above 1,800 feet) in Asotin County. In 2010, higher elevations of St. Johnswort expanded noticeably and are easily visible to back country travelers. Lack of moisture in the fall may be responsible for fewer beetles and a return to wetter weather may help solve this problem. Introducing different genetic strains or even different biocontrols may provide some reduction in the population. Land owners who are concerned about future expansion of this plant on their properties may call the Weed Office for options: (509) 243-2098.

