

The ENEMY: Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* Nutt.)

STRATEGY: This native is very common to our desert and rangelands. This perennial tap-rooted plant spreads only from seeds. There are numerous sub-species of this desirable plant. It usually only grows to a height of 3 feet, but in some moisture areas it has been found to grow to a height of 10 feet. This plant keeps a year round color of silver green, flowers in August, and disperses seed from October through December. Due to the heavy oil in the plant it has a very distinct odor when the plant is crushed.

Attack: Sagebrush competes for moisture and nutrients and if not contained it can rob the desirable plants up to 60 percent of their dietary needs. Heavy range fires occur when this plant reaches a canopy cover greater than 60 percent. Once control has taken place it can reestablish in 20 years, unless Downey brome/Cheatgrass or Medusahead takes over, then the sagebrush and other perennials can not establish due to the excessive fires.

Defense: Many land owners control the plant by disking. This will control the plant without causing long-term damage to the perennial grasses. A disadvantage to this is that it only takes the sagebrush a few years to reestablish. Numerous herbicides are available. For complete control use 2,4-D ester while it is blooming. Bear in mind that this will also kill out any desirable forbs. I encourage people to simply thin the sagebrush. Treating the property with pelletized Spike (Corteva) in the fall will thin the sagebrush over the following years, to about a 30 percent canopy cover (the optimum stand). At this coverage the sagebrush will lift the deeper water for the perennial grasses and will compete against itself, thus reestablishment will not take over for 30 to 40 years and preserving and improving the habitat for Sage grouse. If you are not sure if you have Sage brush or Rabbit brush please contact your County Weed Supervisor for identification.