Weed Awareness

North American weed conference

Nebraska has the honor of hosting The Eighth Annual North American Weed Management Association Conference and Trade Show. This conference is being held at the Arbor Day Farm Lied Conference Center, Nebraska City, Nebraska August 8-10, 2000. Russ Shultz is serving as the program chairman.

The North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) is a network of professional weed managers who are involved in implementing any phase of a local, state, provincial or federal weed law. The mission of NAWMA is to provide education, regulatory direction, professional improvement and environmental awareness to preserve and protect our natural resources from degrading impacts of exotic, invasive noxious weeds.

The theme of this conference is "More invaders are coming! Are you ready?" Across the United States the major thrust of the noxious weed control effort has been directed at noxious weeds that are already well established. In most cases, control efforts do not include aggressive control of newly found, highly invasive weeds. Preventing the establishment of these invasive weeds is the most efficient and effective approach at weed control. The conference will emphasize the establishment of a framework at the national, state and local level for early detection and rapid response to highly invasive weeds.

Presentations will include highlights of the newly developed National Invasive Species Management Plan and Australian experience in fighting newly found invading weeds. Other speakers will address plant data systems, early response efforts, GIS/GPS in weed management, the Nebraska program and other related topics. It is also an excellent opportunity for one-on-one interaction with other attendees about their experiences.

If you desire more information, call 441-7817. Conference information is available now and registration information will be available about June 1 at www.nawma.org. Room reservations should be made now to assure lodging at the conference site.

Noxious weed control on public lands

The weed control authority maintains contact with 30 different public land managers in a coordinated effort of noxious weed control. They represent the following agencies and departments:

City of Lincoln
- Airport Authority
- County/City Property Management
- Lincoln Electric System
- Lincoln Public Schools
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Works & Utilities

County
- County Engineer

State of Nebraska
- Air National Guard
- Army National Guard
- Education Lands & Funds
- UNL Landscape Services
- Department of Roads
- Department of Corrections
- Game & Parks Commission

Other
- Lower Platte South NRD
- NE Public Power District

Each of these land mangers has a noxious weed control program. A meeting was held with all of these managers discussing noxious weed control and management. They all have committed significant resources to planned on-going noxious weed control on property that they own or control. Names of contacts are kept current. Two-way communication is maintained throughout the year. When there is a need to request some follow-up control work of any of these land managers they provide immediate response. The efforts of these land managers are a key part of keeping noxious weeds under control in the county.

What are noxious weeds?

Noxious weed is a legal term used to denote a destructive or harmful weed for the purpose of regulation. These non-native plants aggressively compete with desirable plants and affect man, livestock and wildlife. This not only directly affects landowners, but erodes the tax base for all residents. The business of noxious weed control is everyone's concern and their control is to everyone's benefit. Effective control needs to include controlling the existing infestations and preventing new infestations. The Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture establishes which plants are noxious and the control measures to be used in preventing their spread. The following non-native weeds have been officially designated as noxious in Nebraska:

Canada Thistle *(Cirsium arvense L. Scop.)*
Diffuse Knapweed *(Centaurea diffusa Lam.)*
Leafy Spurge *(Euphorbia esula L.)*
Musk Thistle *(Carduus nutans L.)*
Plumeless Thistle *(Carduus acanthoides L.)*
Spotted and Diffuse Knapweed *(Centaurea maculosa Lam.)*

Following is a list of those noxious weeds commonly found in Lancaster County, along with a brief description and growth habit

Canada Thistle *(Cirsium arvense L. Scop.)*

Life span: perennial
Stems: 2 to 4 feet tall; hollow; erect; branched above; no leafy wings or spiny margins on upper stems below flowers.
Leaves: moderate to coarsely lobed, usually wavy with spiny margins. Upper side light to dark green, shiny, hairy to hairless.
Inflorescence: small 1/2 to 3/4 inch diameter rose purple, sometimes white color, male/female flower on separate plants.
Roots: extensive vertical and horizontal root system.

Leafy Spurge *(Euphorbia esula L.)* ▶

Life span: perennial
Stems: 1 to 3 feet tall; thickly clustered; erect; branched at the top; milky white sap.
Leaves: long and narrow, 1/4 inches wide and 1 to 4 inches long.
Inflorescence: flower very small, surrounded by showy yellow-green heart-shaped bracts.
Roots: deep, spreading, brown with numerous pink buds which may produce new shoots or roots.

Musk Thistle *(Carduus nutans L.)*

Life span: biennial or occasionally an annual. Rosette formed first year.
Stems: up to 6 feet tall; main stem and major branches are hairless. The stem bearing flower head is covered with fine gray hair. The first few inches below the flower head has no leaves attached.
Leaves: dark green, prominent light green midrib, usually smooth or hairless on both sides. Deeply lobed with spiny margins up to 20 inches in length.
Inflorescence: large, solitary 1 to 2-1/2 inches in diameter, usually nodding slightly. Deep rose or purple color. Average plant produces 5,000 to 10,000 seeds; some up to 20,000 seeds.

Plumeless Thistle *(Carduus acanthoides L.)* ▶

Life span: biennial or occasionally an annual. Rosette formed in first year.
Stems: 1 to 4 feet tall, leafy to the base of flower heads.
Leaves: dark green with light midrib. Leaf surface sparsely hairy on top and hairy beneath. Leaves deeply lobed, with narrow spiny margins.
Inflorescence: solitary in cluster of two to five, blooms 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter, erect and usually not drooping.
Roots: stout, fleshy, taproot.
Source: Weeds of Nebraska and the Great Plains, published by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Adopt-A-Clean Road and noxious weed control

The Lancaster County engineer's office introduced the Adopt-A-Clean-Road program in 1991. The program is designed to clean litter from county roadsides. Volunteers "adopt" a road segment and agree to collect litter along their adopted miles for a minimum of two years. Last year 65 permits were active, covering approximately 148 miles of county roadsides. Packets are distributed to each volunteer group by the county engineer's office. Included in each packet is information about noxious weeds in Lancaster County. By studying this information, the Adopt-A-Clean Road sponsors become aware of the noxious weeds within the county. They are asked to report any and all infestations found along their adopted county roadside to the Weed Control Authority office. The county engineer's staff then provides the needed control of the weeds.