

Weed Awareness

Weed Prevention Tips

There are several options for the control of noxious weeds. The easiest and most effective approach is prevention.

Maintain Healthy Grass

Healthy stands of desirable vegetation make it difficult for weeds to get established.

Before purchasing grass or forage seed mixes, it's always good practice to request to see a Certificate of Seed Analysis, which details every seed (including weed seeds) contained in the bag. Even if your dealer says the seed is certified, he/she is required by federal law to provide the certificate on request.

Replant bare areas and water if necessary.

Do not overgraze pastures (see article on opposite page).

If farming, practice conservation tillage to minimize soil disturbance.

Prevent Spreading Weed Seeds

Another basic principle of prevention of new sites becoming infested is not to spread seeds and viable plant parts to new sites. This can be accomplished by being alert to activities that might spread existing infestations and not to infest new sites with movement of noxious weed contaminated articles or materials on to your property.

Noxious weeds may be disseminated by several methods or articles. Following are some treatments for articles capable of disseminating noxious weeds, when such articles are suspected to have noxious weeds present:

• Harvesting machinery and equipment:

- Remove all loose material from the top and sides of the machine and all other places of lodgement by sweeping or the use of forced air or forced water.
- Remove all noxious weeds from shakers, sieves and other places of lodgement.
- Run the machine empty for at least five minutes, alternately increasing and decreasing the speed.
- Follow the manufacturer's detailed instructions for cleaning the machine.
- Whenever possible, aforementioned treatments should be performed while the article is still on the land on which it became infested. If treatment cannot be performed at this location, the location selected should be such as to minimize the possible dissemination of noxious weeds.

• Trucks, RV's, other vehicles and articles such as railroad ties, fence posts and fencing:

- Wash vehicles prior to moving from weeds to weed-free areas whenever possible.
- Treat by brushing, sweeping, forced air, forced water and/or physical removal of noxious weeds.

• Livestock:

- Avoid moving livestock directly from weedy to weed-free areas.

• Grain and seed suspected to contain noxious weeds should not be sold or transferred to another person:

- Treat by using a seed cleaner which is effective in removing the noxious weeds from the grain and seed.
- Screenings remaining following treatment should not be used for feed or for any other purpose which could result in the dissemination of noxious weeds.

• Soil, sod, nursery stock, hay, straw, manure and other similar materials:

- No known acceptable method of treatment exists for these articles. Such articles should not be moved from the location at which they initially become infested, but may be utilized at that location.

Five of Nebraska's noxious weeds can be found in Lancaster County:



Musk Thistle



Plumeless Thistle



Canada Thistle



Purple Loosestrife



Leafy Spurge

Controlling Existing Infestations

Following are some recommendations for controlling existing weed infestations.

Musk and Plumeless Thistle

When attempting to control musk thistle or plumeless thistle, it is imperative to prevent seed production. They are biennial weeds that reproduce only by seed. Each plant is capable of producing up to 20,000 seeds. In areas where there are only a few plants, the tap root can be severed below the soil surface with a shovel, which effectively kills the plant. The application of 2,4-D at the two quarts rate per acre will kill the rosettes in April to mid-May and in the fall. Roundup is not very effective. The plants germinate throughout the spring and fall so the sites must continually be reinspected and treated. Herbicides with residual control such as Tordon 22K, Clarity and Vanquish may be applied at eight ounce rate per acre with the 2,4-D to control the later germinating thistle and minimize the follow-up control required. When the plants start producing their flower stem (bolting) they are more difficult to kill. Escort or Ally at a .3 ounce rate per acre along with one quart of 2,4-D is effective through 50 percent flowering. Maintaining a good healthy stand of grass is very effective control.



Musk thistle leaves (left) are not as deeply serrate and lack hairs, while plumeless thistle leaves (right) are deeply serrate and have hair on the undersides.

Canada Thistle

Canada thistle is a perennial plant that reappears unless controlled. It spreads by seeds and extensive underground rhizomes. There are male and female plants. Both have to be present in order for viable seeds to be produced. Many of the small infestations in Lancaster County appear to have been spread by infested sod and nursery stock and are not producing viable seed because both the male and female plants are not present or the plants are being cut not allowing them to flower. This plant is very persistent when it infests a lawn or yard area. The usual lawn herbicides are not very effective in its control. Two herbicides available to commercial lawn applicators, Confront and Millennium, provide good control. Lawn broadleaf herbicides that include dicamba provide some control. Individual plants could be spot treated with Roundup. Digging will not provide control. Canada thistle in nonresidential areas could be treated with Tordon 22K at one quart per acre, or Curtail three quarts per acre or spot treat with two to five percent solution of Roundup Ultra.

Purple Loosestrife

Purple loosestrife plants are not difficult to control. But they can produce over a million tiny seeds per plant. These seeds can remain viable for many years until the conditions are right for their germination or they can be easily transported by water and other means to a site with saturated soil conditions where they can germinate. This is why it is very important that ornamental lythrum is removed from yards since their seeds will most likely contribute to the establishment of infestations of wild purple loosestrife along the streams and drainageways in the City and County. Ornamental plants can be killed with a broadleaf herbicide labeled or spot treated with Roundup avoiding contact with desirable plants. These plants could also be dug, removing all rootstock. Do not compost. Dispose of in secured black garbage bags with other refuse. Reinspect and treat uncontrolled plants. Wild infestations can be controlled with aquatic formulation of 2,4-D amine at two quarts per acre or spot treat with Rodeo at two ounces per gallon of clean water. Reinspect and treat uncontrolled plants.

Leafy Spurge

Leafy spurge is one of the most difficult weeds to manage because of its persistent nature. Anyone who manages this plant is frustrated by the poor long-term control herbicides provide and the length of time biological controls requires. To add to the frustration, "control" of leafy spurge is usually the only obtainable goal as eradication is not possible once it establishes its root system. Herbicides that provide effective control are Plateau/Oasis at 8-12 ounces in the fall with an application of 2,4-D in the spring to control seed formation or Tordon 22k at one pint per acre plus one quart of 2,4-D applied during the spring and fall. A two to five percent solution of Roundup can be used as a spot treatment. The Apthona species of flea beetle have provided some control over a long period.