

Weed Awareness

Prepared by

Weed Control Authority
Lancaster County



The Weed Control Authority is responsible for implementation of the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act throughout Lancaster County. The authority has also provided the inspection and administration of the City of Lincoln's Weed Abatement Program since entering into an interlocal agreement with the city in 1996.

The County Commissioners serve as the Lancaster County Weed Control Authority. Russell Shultz serves as the superintendent and supervises a seasonal staff of six weed inspectors with the assistance of Chief Inspector Barb Frazier and Lori Pracheil, Account Clerk.

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2007 Annual Report

The major goal of the Lancaster County Weed Control Authority is to get landowners to voluntarily comply with the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act and City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Program.

The first step is to make the landowner aware of these responsibilities and obtain their willingness to abide by them. The second step is to provide any needed assistance to landowners. And the third step is to carry out an inspection program, as needed, to identify infestations and violations for the purpose of getting landowners to prevent and control the noxious weed infestations or to avoid and correct weed abatement violations when they occur.

Noxious Weed Program

The Lancaster County Noxious Weed Program promotes awareness and educates landowners how to control noxious weeds. The program provides general awareness through the Lancaster County Weed Control Authority Web site, this annual Weed Awareness insert in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension NEBLINE, exhibits and newsletters.

The most direct awareness effort is carried with an extensive survey and inspection program. This program utilizes a computer data base of all inspections since 1994 and the Lincoln Lancaster Geographic Information System used to record the locations of noxious weed infestations found.

Sites are selected for inspection from previous year's inspection information which indicates the severity and extent of the infestation and the control efforts made by the landowner. Sites are selected where it is felt the landowner needs a reminder letter or

assistance in control efforts and, in a few cases, the need for possible forced control. These landowners are provided with an aerial photograph showing the location(s) of the noxious weeds found by the inspector and recommended options for control. Additional sites are inspected when observed by an inspector or when a complaint is received. Follow-up inspections are made to assure control is accomplished.

Musk Thistle—In 2007, 407 sites were selected for inspection. An additional 30 sites were inspected because of complaints received and 92 sites observed by the inspectors during the season or when they surveyed the roads and adjacent lands when driving the 1,400 miles of county roads at the end of June. Over 8,800 acres were inspected, confirming 451 infestations on 1,298 acres. Cards were sent to 18 landowners with only trace infestations, reminder letters were sent to 265 and 94 legal notifications were sent. The Authority contracted for forced control at two sites and the inspectors provided control at six sites. Landowners controlled 310 sites on 1,008 acres. Inspections were made of 57 sites in the fall that did not get their sites controlled in the spring.

Leafy Spurge—A total of 319 leafy spurge sites were selected for inspection. The 175 county roadside sites were contracted for spraying. The county has been spraying these roadside sites since 1989. Even with this annual spraying effort, all the sites have not been controlled. The number and acres of sites have probably been reduced by 50%. This is a reflection of how difficult leafy spurge is to control. There was a total of 491 acres found infested on 259 sites. Reminder letters were sent to 75 landowners and legal notices were sent to six landowners.

Purple Loosestrife—All 50 known wild purple loosestrife infestations were selected for inspection. No ornamental sites were selected because all of the plants on the 1,380 sites inspected since 2000 have been removed. Four ornamental sites and two wildlife sites were also inspected as a result of being observed by inspectors. A total of 97 inspections were made on the 56 sites. Inspectors found 35 violations on 16 acres. No violations were found on the other 22 sites. Landowner notifications included four legal notices, 31 reminder letters and one personal contact. Landowners controlled 26 sites. Follow-up will be made on all 35 violations.

Other Noxious Weeds—Canada thistle inspections were made on five sites. Landowners controlled two of the three sites found infested. Saltcedar was controlled on all three sites found.

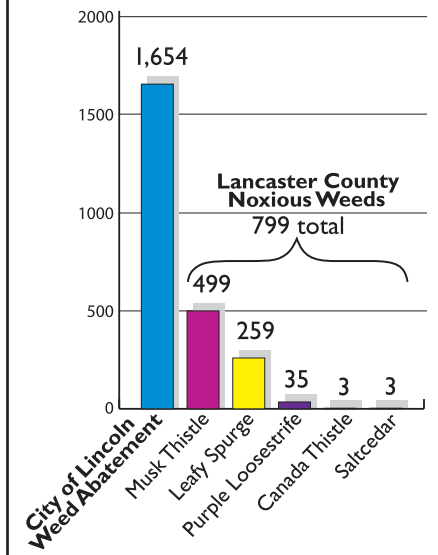
Surveys for Potential Noxious Weeds—Two potential noxious weeds are showing up in the county. These are phragmites and sericia lespedeza. Surveys have begun to determine their extent and what possible action may be taken. See the stories about them on page four of this insert.

City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Program

The City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Ordinance requires owners of land within the city limits to maintain the height of weeds and worthless vegetation below six inches. This program uses three seasonal inspectors. Most inspections are carried out as a result of complaints. 145 properties were selected for inspection because of past violations and the lack of response to correct the violations. There were 1,806 complaints on 1,622 properties.

Inspection Summary

1,962 total violations/infestations



Over 300 additional properties inspected had significant violations where it appeared there was no regular maintenance performed.

It required 4,590 inspections to make the initial and follow-up inspections on 2,103 sites on 1,180 acres. Violations were found on 1,656 sites on 660 acres. Complaints made on 424 sites did not have a violation when inspected within three days of the complaint. These sites either were not in violation when the complaint was made, or they were cut prior to the inspection.

It cost an estimated \$6,500 to send 647 legal notifications and 1,164 reminder letters, publish 172 legal notices in the newspaper and to make 20 personal contacts. The 1,529 sites cut by landowners were over 92% of the violations. Forced-cutting was contracted on 115 sites at the cost of \$5,465. Each contracted control was also billed an administrative fee of \$60. Violators were billed a total of \$12,005. Only \$2,577 was collected leaving billings amounting to \$9,409 being specially assessed.

Learn to Recognize Nebraska's Noxious Weeds

The Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act states it is the duty of each person who owns or controls land to effectively control noxious weeds on such land. Pictured are Nebraska's noxious weeds which can be found in Lancaster County.*



Musk Thistle



Leafy Spurge



Purple Loosestrife



Canada Thistle



Saltcedar



Plumeless Thistle

Noxious weed is a legal term used to denote a destructive or harmful weed for the purpose of regulation. The Director of Agriculture establishes which plants are noxious. These non-native plants compete aggressively with desirable plants and vegetation. Failure to control noxious weeds in this state is a serious problem which is detrimental to the production of crops and livestock and to the welfare of residents of this state. Noxious weeds may also devalue land and reduce tax revenue.

*Nebraska's noxious weeds Spotted and Diffuse Knapweeds have not been found in Lancaster County.