

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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2008 Annual Report

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

The first step is to make landowners aware of these responsibilities and obtain their willingness to abide by them. The second step is to provide any needed assistance to the landowners. 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

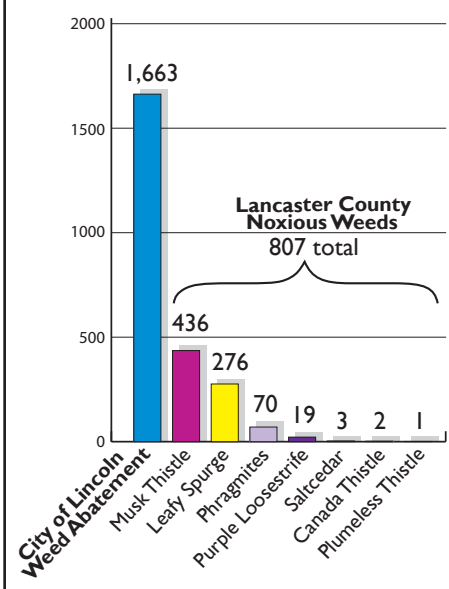
The Lancaster Noxious Weed Program promotes awareness and knowledgeable landowners who can carry out effective control programs. The program provides general awareness through the annual Weed Awareness insert in the UNL Extension in Lancaster County NEBLINE, the Lancaster County Weed Control Authority Web page, various 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 the previous year's inspection

Inspection Summary

2,470 total violations/infestations



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 landowner sites are inspected when observed, a complaint is received and infestations found. Follow-up inspections are made to assure control is accomplished.

Musk Thistle—In 2008, 491 sites were selected for inspection. An additional nine sites were inspected

because of complaints received and 28 sites observed by the inspectors during other inspections and while making a survey of the roads and adjacent lands when driving the 1,400 miles of county roads the last part of June. Over 8,300 acres were inspected resulting in finding 436 infestations on 975 acres. Cards were sent to 41 landowners with only trace infestations; reminder letters were sent to 241; and 91 legal notifications were sent. The Authority contracted for forced control on three sites and nine acres. Landowners controlled 292 sites on 588 acres. Landowners did not completely control 117 sites. These landowners received letters about doing fall control and informed these sites would be inspected in the spring of 2009.

Leafy Spurge—A total of 342 leafy spurge sites were selected for inspection, of which 191 were located in county roadsides. The 170 county roadside sites found to be infested 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 353 acres found infested on 276 sites. Reminder letters were sent to 70 landowners and a legal notice was sent to one landowner.

Purple Loosestrife—All 41 known wild purple loosestrife infestations were selected for inspection. One ornamental site

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Phragmites Added to Noxious Weed List

Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) Director, Greg Ibach announced the statewide designation of non-native phragmites as a noxious weed April 15, 2008. The statewide designation, which took effect immediately, is an expansion of a temporary designation issued in 2007 for phragmites within the Republican River basin.

Ibach said the statewide designation is necessary to help county weed control officials work with landowners to address areas of high infestation and to prevent further spread of this invasive species. Phragmites is primarily found along Nebraska's rivers, streams, floodplains and lakeshores.

"In order to be good stewards of the land, we need to protect our river systems from invasive riparian, non-native plants," Ibach said. "The designation is an important tool for weed control officials who are working on projects to control phragmites."

Ibach has the authority to issue temporary designations under the Noxious Weed Control Act. The temporary designation will expire in February 2009, and Ibach said he anticipates moving ahead with the formal process to add phragmites to the permanent noxious weed list before that time.

According to Mitch Coffin, NDA noxious weed program manager, phragmites can quickly form a monoculture and displace native riparian plants, grasses and forbs. Once phragmites matures, it sends out rhizomes searching for water; these rhizomes can stretch as much as 30 feet in search of water. Phragmites can grow to 20 feet tall.

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



Phragmites



Purple Loosestrife



Saltcedar



Canada Thistle



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.