Reprinted with permission from: 1995 Leafy Spurge Symposium. Fargo, North Dakota. July 25-27, 1995. p. 38.

Sponsored by: Great Plains Agriculture Council and North Dakota State University.

DNA Characterization of *Aphthona* spp.

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The recent increase in environmental awareness and bio-diversity issues by a more concerned and knowledgeable society has resulted in biological control based pest management practitioners pushing the envelope of classical taxonomy to the limit. State and federal regulations require that new introductions be identified. The classical morphological methods used in the past are based on lengthy studies. The time required to study and develop classical methods for identifying these exotic and often new species delays the introduction of possible new natural enemies. Today, the increased demand for use of non-chemical methods requires new approaches be developed for use by growers to manage agriculture pests. These new management approaches require more importation of the natural enemies from foreign countries. The time these natural enemies spend in quarantine facilities may compromise valuable genetic traits that provide control of a target weed. Now scientists have several new tools based on molecular techniques that provide definitive separation of closely related natural enemies. These new techniques provide rapid identification of natural enemies from foreign countries that facilitates release from quarantine. Personnel at the Mission Biological Control Center have successfully utilized randomly amplified polymorphic DNA to separate closely related species of *Aphthona.* This information is shared with all scientists committed to management of leafy spurge, systematists at the national museum and regulatory officials at the state and federal level.