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Leafy spurge symposium: Future directions of leafy spurge research from a university viewpoint

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I have been asked to substitute on the original program today to talk about the “Future Directions of Leafy Spurge Research from a University Viewpoint” ...Actually, you will be hearing an Extension person’s viewpoint of the University’s viewpoint of the future directions of leafy spurge research.

Leafy spurge’s introduction into Wyoming is unknown; however, it was identified in Park County in 1944 and in Crook County in 1946. It is currently found in all 23 Wyoming counties.

The latest leafy spurge survey (1981) indicates that there are 38,442 acres on private land, 7,176 acres on state land, and 3,000 acres on federal land for a total of 48,168 acres in Wyoming.

It is estimated that leafy spurge is currently found on 2.5 million acres of rangeland in the United States and Canada. Maybe we are fortunate in Wyoming to only have 48,000 plus acres, as some of our neighboring states are estimating considerably greater acreages. For example, estimates of acreage being reported in some neighboring states are over 800,000 acres in North Dakota; Montana 500,000 acres; Nebraska 105,000 acres; and 60,000 acres in South Dakota.

I have very briefly outlined that problem; now, let’s think in terms of research. As everyone present at this meeting knows, research takes dollars and research scientists with time available and the interest in conducting the research.

The USDA has recognized that leafy spurge is a very serious problem and has directed \$200,000 for research efforts. The Old West Regional Commission also budgeted \$125,000 for research efforts to be shared among five states with serious leafy spurge problems: Montana received \$34,000; North Dakota \$32,000; Wyoming \$24,198; South Dakota \$16,000; and Nebraska \$15,000. Industry has also supplied large amounts of monies in the form of grants for research.

The Wyoming State Legislature, recognizing the significance of the leafy spurge problem in Wyoming, enacted the Leafy Spurge Act in 1978. During the last three bienniums, monies have been appropriated amounting to \$4.3 million to assist landowners

with the financial burden of controlling leafy spurge. George Hittle will be discussing this program during this morning's session. At this time, \$10,000 has been made available to the College of Agriculture from a Wyoming Department of Agriculture grant to assist with leafy spurge.

I have been asked to discuss future directions of leafy spurge from a University viewpoint. Ladies and gentlemen, there have been considerable strides made with our research program but we have a long way to go. I relate this fact to approximately three summers ago when a very energetic and aggressive graduate student by the name of Ron Vore returned to Laramie after evaluating and soil sampling the research plots at Sundance. Ron appeared very dejected and disheartened. When asked what his problem was, he informed us that the trials that had shown complete leafy spurge vegetative control for two years had live roots and shoots 12 to 16 inches below the soil surface. Essentially, what he was telling us is that our hopes to obtain one treatment eradication with existing chemicals had just gone down the tube. Also, that additional research would need to be conducted to develop economical and effective retreatments.

I have serious concerns when I think about future leafy spurge research. Where are the research funds going to come from? As most of you know, the Old West Regional Commission has been dissolved. The USDA is having budget problems and the state budgets are not all that rosy, even in Wyoming. We never know when industry grant funds may cease to exist.

With these circumstances existing, I feel Universities in states having problems must identify leafy spurge research as a high priority and go forward to request funds to carry out the vitally needed research for our producers and preserve our land resources.

I am sure, as the program proceeds, you will note not only the contribution research has made but also that a great deal of work is needed. Thanks for the opportunity to express my views.