

Reprinted with author's permission from: 1983 Leafy Spurge Symposium Proceedings. Sundance, WY. June 21-22, 1983. pp. 17-18.

Published by: Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Leafy spurge viewpoint from Weed and Pest District board member

JOHN DORRANCE

Rancher and District Board of Directors, Hulett, Wyoming

It is very hard for me to separate being a rancher from being a weed and pest board member. Because I got on the Weed and Pest Board, and because of my leafy spurge problem. I don't think I'd be on it if I didn't have leafy spurge; I wouldn't care about it and I wouldn't be on the board. I probably have the second worst infestation in the county and always will, it is there to stay, it is not going to go anywhere. So I got on the Weed and Pest to eradicate leafy spurge in Crook County. I am proud of our county, we didn't eradicate, but we did control it. Now I think we are the control capital of Wyoming, maybe of the world, who knows. The Russians might beat us, but they've got a problem.

Now what I'd like to do is take you through some figures and kind of tell you where we have gone and mostly where we are going to go. What you must realize is that we've been through three weed and pest supervisors and they have all been good men and they have all done a good job. We don't have a big fancy outfit, we don't have gobs of pickups and we don't spend a lot of money on administrative costs. Our administrative costs are running, for the whole program, \$32,693 if the federal government could administrate at \$2,100,000 program for that we probably would be really on the move by now.

So we aren't very fancy, but you will see that we got the job done despite some obstacles. Some of the acres we thought we had 9,600 cases of spurge to be treated, actually what we have treated initially has been closer to 13,000 acres. About 11,946 acres of private land, 200 acres BLM, and 1,500 plus acres state land, 1.5 acres of Roping Club. Some figures aren't included in this, we've got the Devils Tower National Monument, and there was spurge all over it and tomorrow you will see that there is very little spurge in that park.

The BLM – that's a bad one, they don't like treating their acres, we wrote nasty letters, they have told us to go fly a kite. We have gotten together and we are getting the job done together.

The state, the state sometimes doesn't have enough money, but they have come up with the money to treat their land too, so we are getting the problem solved there.

Other people in the county, we yell and scream at, so far that is all that has been necessary to get the problem solved.

Now I'd like to talk about the cost to do this. The cost is \$2,100,000, figures out to about \$154 an acre, the USDA says you can go out and buy farm land in Wyoming for \$160 an acre, so what we have done here is we've kept it from spreading, we haven't been eradicating it, we have kept it from spreading so we've probably kept that land that is worth \$160 an acre worth the \$160 an acre.

What we have done is drawn a line around our problem area and fighting the battle in just one spot rather than the whole state. I hope we can continue to do that.

Here is how the cost breaks down as far as what we have recorded. The landowner had to pay 20% of that, and comes to about \$368,245. The county mill and vehicle fee is \$325,501, the Wyoming Department of Agriculture came up with \$1,147,477, the BLM came up with \$30,000 and the Commission of Public Lands for the state school land came up with \$227,722. Now that is a lot of money.

I think you will see tomorrow, we are proud of it, because it is the landowners who do it, we don't have fancy crews and we don't need weed and pest supervisors on ground applications, it is put on by the individual landowner. Maybe that is why we have kept the cost so low.

What I'd like to bring up here is the herbicide cost and the application cost. I think it would be of interest as this was touched on by Jess and I have some figures here to show when we initially started, herbicide costs were around \$200,000 for the initial 2,206 acres treated. Application costs, a percentage ratio, of around \$30,000 that was about 15%. Now on the first retreat herbicide costs dropped to \$65,700 and application costs increased proportionally 28%. On the second retreat herbicide costs again dropped to \$57,000 and total application costs increased again, as a percent, and there up to 35%.

So you can see that what we have been saying is that if you have one acre of leafy spurge you are always going to have one acre of leafy spurge. You are going to have to go over that whole area. Now if you can do it out in the open with a helicopter or an airplane that is fine, I happen to have pine trees straight up and down, that means a man with a backpack and that is expensive. So far we have been able to manage and kill the weeds.

Basically that is all I have to say, I could talk forever as a rancher but I'm suppose to be here as a Weed and Pest board member.

Again, I'd like to say that we are controlling the weeds, and we being the whole county, everybody out there is doing it, that has it and if they aren't they should because we'll get after them if they don't do it.

I am real proud of the county, I'm proud of our Weed and Pest Department, and I hope we can continue doing what we have done so far.

Thanks