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## **Overview of the 1987 leafy spurge annual meeting**

CLAUDE H. SCHMIDT

*Laboratory Director, MRRL, U. S. Dept. Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Fargo, ND*

When Dr. Davis asked if I could briefly address the group on this topic, I told him this would be a pleasure since I was involved in the leafy spurge effort from the beginning. Our lead-off speaker, Dr. Russell Lorenz, who was instrumental in getting the leafy spurge program off and running, presented an excellent historical perspective. He pointed out that much has been accomplished in the past 8 years since the first leafy spurge symposium was held in June 1979 in Bismarck, ND, and the follow-up Northern Regional Conference which met in Billings, Montana, in December of that same year. The need for good communication was greatly enhanced with the formation of the GPC-14 Committee in 1980; this group has been very effective and productive.

Then Wayne Colberg reminded us of the importance of public relations. Without an effective on-going public relations program, very little can be accomplished, especially if one is to deal extensively with the public. We cannot depend on others to do this for us if we are to make any real progress.

We were then treated to an elegant demonstration of a new, reasonably low-cost, visual technology that can be used to pinpoint the growth of leafy spurge. This will be especially useful in mapping more inaccessible areas. Thus, air-borne color video combined with microcomputer image processing will be of tremendous help to enable us to know where the spurge is growing. This is the first step towards control. Now we have a technology within the economic means of the user, and a quantum leap forward has been made.

There is a great deal of continued interest in the biocontrol of leafy spurge. Flea beetles and gall midges were released in 1985 and 1986. They have been able to overwinter and are multiplying slowly, according to Bob Carlson and Don Mundahl of North Dakota State University. Peter Fay, Montana State University, really caught our attention when he discussed the use of preconditioned goats for leafy spurge control. There should be some interesting possibilities for biocontrol by getting rid of a few unwanted behavior traits in goats. We are looking forward to hearing of further fascinating developments in biological control at the next meeting of this group which will be held in Rapid City, South Dakota, in 1988.

Chemical control research is alive and doing well, in spite of limited funding. It was encouraging to see some emphasis on more basic studies in attempts to explain what is happening within the plant -- in other words, plant/chemical interactions. This should

prove to be a fruitful avenue of research and may lead to improved control methodologies. As an example, one of the more interesting studies was on the effect of sulfometuron on the shoots formed from roots of leafy spurge.

We were told that there is no magic one-shot treatment for the control of leafy spurge on the horizon and now we are faced with additional problems not envisaged 8 years ago. Very few new chemicals are coming down the pike, and to make the situation worse, EPA may put further restrictions on some of the more effective chemicals we are using today; such as 2-4-D and picloram.

The workshops were quite informative with much give and take and the inclusion of posters was a novel innovation. In the mapping workshop, Terry Volk from Bottineau, ND, showed that traditional mapping systems (low technology) with color overlays can really be used to advantage in a weed-control program.

If there is one item that kept recurring during the meetings, it was the matter of funding; or rather the lack thereof. From a modest beginning, when the pump was primed a few years ago, the amount of funding for research has been decreasing. This is a dangerous trend because the leafy spurge problem keeps growing. We must all work together to try to strengthen the research effort and its funding. On a brighter note, we learned that APHIS is becoming involved and is implementing a leafy spurge biocontrol project with State cooperators and ARS. They will use the new laboratory facility at Bozeman, MT, to enhance their efforts at Mission, TX, to mass-produce insects. Overall, this was a most informative meeting.