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South Dakota leafy spurge control program

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The South Dakota Weed and Pest Department is overseen by a 13 member commission composed of 7 designated members and 6 appointed members. This commission is responsible for formulating the policy for the prevention, suppression, control, and eradication of noxious weeds in South Dakota. Weed and Pest programming is developed by the State Weed and Pest Coordinator and carried out by the State Weed and Pest Supervisor and 3 Area Weed and Pest Supervisors. Control programs on the county level are developed by a local Weed and Pest Board in which many have township representatives to relay local concerns to the Board. The local programs are administered by a County Weed and Pest Supervisor who normally oversees several seasonal employees.

A very conservative estimate of the acres of leafy spurge in South Dakota includes 150,466 acres. Of that acreage, 79,713 is located in pasture and range, 43,808 in noncrop, and 26,945 in crop land.

Other weeds declared as noxious in South Dakota include: field bindweed, Canada thistle, perennial sow thistle, Russian knapweed, hoary cress, and purple loosestrife.

South Dakota state law places the responsibility for noxious weed control on the owner of the property. The responsibility for and the cost of controlling weeds on public property is assumed by the agency that manages such lands.

Upon failure of obtaining voluntary control, both the County and the State have enforcement authority. Enforcement operations include the County or State either contracting with a commercial applicator or treating the infestation with their own equipment. State laws are in place to protect the enforcers from any trespass or crop damage liabilities. All costs for enforcement activities are certified to the county auditor, billed to the landowner, and, if not paid by November one, extended onto the tax roll of that property and all property owned by that landowner.

State quarantine laws have been established and are used with cases that have “slipped through the system” and are an immediate threat to spread an existing or create a new infestation. Movement of quarantined articles is restricted until approved measures are taken to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. In some cases the quarantined articles are destroyed on the premises. Combine inspections are also conducted under quarantine laws to ensure noxious weeds are not transported into the state.

An integrated pest management approach to noxious weed control is practiced in South Dakota. Included in this approach is a biological control program. The first leafy spurge biological control agents were released in South Dakota in 1988. Since that time 86 releases in 27 counties have been made. Three species of *Aphthona* sp. flea beetles are the main thrust of the biological control of leafy spurge. Cooperative block programs are the backbone of controlling large infestations of leafy spurge. Some block programs encompass entire townships or more. Local landowners serve on the project steering committee with Weed and Pest personnel acting in an advisory capacity.

Participation at the 100% level is required for a successful block control program and enforcement operations are conducted to eliminate reinfestation. South Dakota currently has both interstate and intrastate cooperative block control projects. Nursery inspections are made to ensure that noxious weeds are not being marketed or inadvertently marketed for ornamental purposes.

Seed inspections are conducted to ensure seed being sold does not contain weed seeds in excess of what is listed on the label or omitted from the label altogether.

South Dakota has taken a “get tough” policy on noxious weeds. We have laws with a lot of teeth and we are using them to their fullest extent. South Dakota still has a manageable level of leafy spurge and we intend to make sure that it stays that way.