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A county approach to leafy spurge control in rural and urban areas

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The Lancaster County Leafy Spurge Control Program includes efforts in; (1) information dissemination and education, (2) inspection and identification, (3) control of infestations on public lands, (4) marking and controlling infestations on roadsides, (5) prevention of weed propagule dissemination by crops and articles, and (6) issuing of notices for control.

The information and education effort has included mailing information to all landowners with noxious weed infestations, providing information on identification and control at public meetings, dissemination of newsletter articles about leafy spurge, and delivering a message to commercial pesticide applicators during mandatory certification training programs.

Annual inspections are made of known infestations and new infestations are documented as they are encountered or are reported to us. Information on leafy spurge distribution within Lancaster County is maintained in a database on computer. Investigations into using this database in a geographic information system to assist in noxious weed management are being conducted.

A roadside spraying program was initiated in 1989. Special signs have been purchased and are used to mark roadside infestation sites. Efforts are being made to prevent initiation of new infestations by restricting the movement of crops that are contaminated with leafy spurge. A letter has been sent to alert excavation contractors and utility companies about the movement of leafy spurge during their earth moving activities. The signs and letters have resulted in good cooperation from the public. Crop and hay inspections are made on request and prior to issuing quarantine notices.

Notices requesting control of leafy spurge within 10 days were sent to private landowners and letters were sent to public agencies responsible for land infested with noxious weeds that had not been treated. A total of 96 notices were sent out and 94 infestations were controlled on 552 acres. Public agencies treated 196 infestations on 348 acres following receipt of letters requesting noxious weed control. Letters will be sent this fall that will contain information on recommendations to control noxious weeds in the fall.

The Lancaster County Leafy Spurge Control Program has resulted in increased public awareness and a willingness of private landowners and public agencies to provide control in both the rural and urban areas. One problem has been weed control in urban areas because of the large number of relatively small land parcels. However, once people are aware of the problem, they respond in a positive, regardless of whether they are urban or rural landowners.