

## Spring Control of Leafy Spurge

Its that time of year again. Snow is melting away and grass and weeds are starting to come alive again. One nasty weed that always comes early is Leafy Spurge. Leafy Spurge currently infests 325,000 acres in Nebraska. While pastures, rangeland and right-of-ways tend to carry the largest infestation levels, other areas can equally provide habitat for this persistent, deep-rooted, invasive plant species. It can, and will, grow anywhere.

In 1923, a botanical survey found this plant in York County. Since that time, it has spread into 82 counties in Nebraska. Landowners and producers spend millions of dollars each year to control Leafy Spurge. This plant competes for water and nutrients while depleting grass and forage, which is utilized by livestock, wildlife and recreationists. Leafy Spurge is considered toxic to cattle, however, sheep and goats may eat it following an acclimation period with little or no harm.

Leafy Spurge is a perennial. It spreads by seeds and rhizomes. With an extensive root system it is important to be vigilant and control it every spring and fall. Eventually it will weaken or kill the plant but being persistent is the key. The seeds can lay dormant for years and then decide to sprout under the right conditions. The flower is greenish-yellow, the stem is erect and the leaves are alternate, oblong and drooping. An easy way to tell if you have this is by breaking a piece of the stem and a white latex like sap will emerge.

We can all do our part by controlling leafy spurge infestations or by reporting uncontrolled infestations to Todd Boller –Fillmore County Weed Superintendent- 402-366-1921.