



Wascana Upper Qu'Appelle Watersheds
Association Taking Responsibility

Qu'Appelle South Weed Management Area

WEED CONTROL STRATEGIES FOR HOMEOWNERS

The Town of Lumsden, RM of Lumsden and WUQWATR are working together to deal with weed species in the RM of Lumsden No. 189. Although chemical applicators have been contracted to spray out weeds, there are alternative methods for controlling weeds that homeowners can use on their property while eliminating or reducing pesticide use.

The most common species that are being targeted include scentless chamomile, baby's breath and leafy spurge. These plants are classified as *Noxious Weeds* according to provincial legislation. Noxious weeds are invasive species that are already established regionally and are expanding into other areas. Landowners are required by The Weed Control Act (2010) to "contain and control any established infestations of noxious weeds located on the land."

According to the Saskatchewan Invasive Species Council, controlling invasive species is important because they "threaten the integrity and economic value of Saskatchewan's ecosystems... decreasing land productivity, and diminishing aesthetic values of the land, costing our economy millions of dollars each year."

Noxious Weeds are different from other weeds that are classified as *Prohibited Weeds* or *Nuisance Weeds*. Prohibited weeds are very dangerous weeds not yet established or are very rare in Saskatchewan. These weeds must be reported immediately, quarantined and effectively destroyed. Nuisance weeds, such as dandelions and Russian thistle, are weeds that are already established in the province but pose less of a threat to the ecosystem than noxious weeds.

In the RM and Town of Lumsden, these noxious weeds spread throughout pastures, along roadways, and on the shores of lakes and rivers. They choke out existing vegetation that is important for a healthy ecosystem. Leafy spurge is the most disruptive of the three weeds. It can render parts of a pasture useless because cattle will avoid areas with the weed and it can be toxic to cattle and horses. Leafy spurge can also irritate skin when handled.

Currently, spraying has been done in priority areas around the RM, and the Town of Lumsden. As an alternative to spraying, spurge eating beetles that have been introduced from Eastern Europe will also be placed in certain areas as a way to control leafy spurge.

Pesticides can be an effective and safe method for controlling weeds, but it is not always the best option in all situations. Chemicals should be used carefully or not at all in areas that are near water sources or bodies, or areas accessible to children or pets. They also may not be as practical for infestation areas of certain sizes. Alternative methods should be used in these circumstances.

Being able to identify these common plants is an important part of weed control. ***Scentless Chamomile*** is a weed that has white petals surrounding a yellow center. It can commonly be mistaken for a daisy. It has smooth, finely divided leaves (similar to carrot leaves) along a green or reddish-green stem and can grow up to a metre tall.



Scentless Chamomile



Scentless Chamomile

Baby's Breath began as an ornamental plant but has become a widespread problem across North America. It has many branches with numerous small white or rosy coloured flowers that give it a “puff ball” appearance. The stems can be blue-green to grey-green and can grow close to one metre tall.



Baby's Breath



Baby's Breath

Leafy Spurge is one of the most targeted weeds around Saskatchewan. It is a pale green plant that can grow easily in many places. It can be distinguished by its clusters of yellowish-green flowers and the milky sap it produces when cut.



Leafy Spurge



Leafy Spurge

It is important that landowners know what to do with these weeds to help control them as soon as they have identified them. In most cases, mowing is a good way to stop the plant from spreading by seed, but the plant can grow back. Hand picking is another option for scentless chamomile and baby's breath and is effective for small infestations. It is important to bag and dispose of plant material in the landfill. Grazing by sheep or goats is also an effective way to control leafy spurge because they are able to safely eat and digest the plant.

If these weeds are not controlled, they will become an even bigger problem for landowners across Saskatchewan and will require more time and resources. Landowners can do their part to help the RM and Town of Lumsden's weed management programs by managing invasive species on their private property.

For more information on weed control, visit the Saskatchewan Invasive Species Council at www.saskinvasives.ca