

# UNL Extension: Acreage Insights

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Leafy Spurge – Best Treatment Options

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Leafy spurge is in full bloom now and treatment is recommended to keep it from producing seed. If you are tired of treating every spring with poor results we suggest you switch your treatment program to include a fall application. Treat with herbicides at least two weeks prior to a killing frost for best results. This is the time when the plant is taking down nutrients to help get it through the winter and will carry the herbicide deeper into the root zone. This is far more effective than just burning off the top growth when treating in the spring. For proper herbicide rates use the [UNL Extension 2013 Guide for Weed Management](#) and follow the label directions.

Considered one of the most serious perennial weed species, leafy spurge is threatening millions of acres of pasture and rangeland in the western United States. It is one of the most persistent and difficult to control perennial weeds yet encountered.

Leafy spurge plants are one to two feet high and the stems contain a milky white latex sap. This colorful plant has greenish yellow bracts that support the actual flowers. The seed pods break open at maturity, shooting seeds 15 feet or more from the parent plant. The root systems have numerous pink buds that produce new shoots, and pieces of root as short as one-half inch will give rise to new leafy spurge plants.

Achieving control on a large area of leafy spurge is costly and difficult. It is advisable to control the small patches before they spread and become a more costly problem. Leafy spurge is an aggressive plant; therefore a programmed approach achieves best results. Plan a complete three to four year re-treatment program. Mark the location with some type of permanent marker such as a T-post so you can find it again next year as the stand begins to weaken. Whenever an infestation has been controlled, inspect the area every spring and fall for several years to prevent re-infestation by seedlings.

Contact the Weed Control Office at 402-441-7817 or email [weeds@lancaster.ne.gov](mailto:weeds@lancaster.ne.gov) for help in developing a control plan that's right for your situation.