



Saskatchewan gets new Weed Control Act



by Clark Brenzil, PAg
Provincial Specialist, Weed Control
Crops Branch

The Saskatchewan Legislature recently passed a significant piece of new legislation that will help producers and Rural Municipalities alike: *The Weed Control Act, 2010* now replaces *The Noxious Weeds Act, 1984*.

Changes made in the new legislation are intended to refocus enforcement efforts from everyday weeds to new and emerging problems. This is because little impact can be made on most widely established weeds in Saskatchewan, but it is possible to prevent the introduction and spread of new weeds into and through the province.

The largest change in the new Act is the placement of weeds into three categories: Prohibited, Noxious and Nuisance. This categorization allows the enforcement effort to vary with the weed's relative importance.

Weeds that are rare and are a demonstrated problem outside Saskatchewan are of higher importance than weeds that are widespread. Few people will have even heard of many of the weeds in the Prohibited category, such as saltcedar and yellow star-thistle. While many of the weeds in the Noxious category, such as leafy spurge and scentless chamomile, or the Nuisance category, like dandelion and povertyweed, will be familiar to most as problem weeds.

The Weed Control Act, 2010 will continue to be enforced by municipally appointed weed inspectors. What has changed are the maximum

amounts that may be recovered from a landowner by the municipality for weed control costs incurred if control measures are not completed by the land operator in a timely fashion, as well as the maximum amounts of fines that may be levied for offences under the Act. The maximum cost allowance under the previous legislation did not allow municipalities to be compensated for work that was done as a result of enforcement. It was also felt that the previous maximum amount for fines was no longer a deterrent.



Changes to Saskatchewan's weed control measures will help keep threatening weeds, like the yellow starthistle (above), out of the province. Photo: Steve Dewey, Utah State University, www.bugwood.org.

Another change is an appeal process introduced in *The Weed Control Act, 2010* as a way to balance the powers granted to municipalities. Landowners that feel they have not been treated fairly by the weed inspector may appeal first to the municipality and then to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, if necessary.

The Weed Control Act, 2010, will also protect natural areas such as native rangeland, forests and aquatic habitats from the introduction of invasive plants.

The Weed Control Act will become law this spring and come into force in the fall of 2010. Prior to that time, weeds will be designated for each category by Minister's Order and *The Weed Control Regulations* will be drafted that will contain the specifics of various administrative items.

These changes were made because the existing legislation was no longer meeting Saskatchewan's needs for legislation that protects agricultural and natural lands from the introduction and spread of new and damaging weeds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Clark Brenzil at (306) 787-4673.

ALFALFA WEEVIL ON THE RISE IN SASKATCHEWAN



by Andre Bonneau, BSA, PAg
Forage Management Specialist
Agriculture Knowledge Centre

Alfalfa weevils are becoming a serious issue. If you've grown alfalfa in the southeastern part of Saskatchewan, chances are you've seen alfalfa weevil damage. The extent of weevils, however, has stretched north and west into the Saskatoon area.

Alfalfa weevil adults over-winter in debris or alfalfa stubble. Once alfalfa growth begins, the weevils begin feeding and lay eggs into the stems of alfalfa plants. The eggs hatch in one to three weeks and the larvae begin to feed on new growth. High larval populations will give the alfalfa field a silvery sheen as the leaves become skeletonised. Peak feeding occurs from mid-June to mid-July. After several development stages, the larvae fall to the ground and pupate. A new generation of adults emerge seven to 14 days later.

The most cost-effective way to control weevil is to harvest a hay crop before extensive feeding damage occurs. Fortunately, the timing of cutting hay and alfalfa weevil control coincides with the early bloom stage of alfalfa. If cutting is not possible, as in alfalfa seed production, research suggests one larva/stem on a 30 cm alfalfa plant, two larvae/stem on a 40 cm plant or three larvae/stem on any plant may warrant an insecticide application. Please refer to the Saskatchewan Ministry of

Agriculture's publication *Guide to Crop Protection* for details on monitoring, economic thresholds and insecticide application.

In recent years there have been situations where larval populations have remained high after the first cut and chemical control has also been required. Two or more active larvae per crown or four to eight larvae per ft.² may warrant insecticide application.

Regional forage specialists in the province will be conducting an alfalfa weevil survey between late June and early July. If you have had weevils in the past or suspect you may have had weevils, please contact your Regional Forage Specialist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- Your local Ministry of Agriculture Regional Office.



Alfalfa weevil larvae, photo courtesy AAFC.

