

NOXIOUS & INVASIVE RANGELAND WEEDS, A RANCHER'S PERSPECTIVE  
CALIFORNIA WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY  
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**Invasive and noxious weeds** ... we all have them. The simple fact is, whether they are on private rangelands, right-of-ways, or public lands, something has to be done about them. What's being done about them?

The federal government created the Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974 (PL 93-629)(U.S.C. 2801 et. seq.) as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990; Section 1453 ("Section 15, Management of Undesirable Plants on Federal Lands"); and the Carson-Foley Act ("Public Law 90-583). Sounds pretty impressive until you hear that no funding was made available until September 1991, and they are still having meetings and studying the problem. The California Interagency Noxious Weeds Coordinating Committee (CINWCC) was created to outline a program to address the noxious weed problem on public lands in California and after attending several CINWCC meetings we felt the livestock industry needed to take the lead on any programs addressing noxious weeds on California Rangelands.

The CCA Range Improvement Committee decided not to wait for the agencies to decide what could be done about the problem of noxious weeds and sent out a survey asking local cattlemen's associations to list ten of the most invasive weeds in their area. Twenty counties responded to the survey and the lists were made available to the CINWCC, CDFA, and other interested parties in the form of an inventory of A, B, and C rated weeds. Many phone calls were made throughout the state and a lot of discussion within CCA took place, which led to the concept of developing a CCA "Noxious Weed Pilot Program." Recognizing that maintaining private property rights would be the paramount objective, implementation of a pilot program would require that our members become involved and that we provide the means to furnish allied industry support and new technology to our members.

This would turn out to be a much larger task than we had anticipated and raised three key questions: 1) Since California does not have the variety of herbicides for rangeland applications that are available to the other 49 states, what could be done to make those products available for use in California? 2) Other than herbicides, what other technologies were available to control noxious weeds? 3) How could we monitor and record quantitative and qualitative data for others to use?

Letters were sent out to allied industry chemical manufacturers and suppliers of herbicides notifying them of our desire to proceed with pilot programs and requesting their support and participation in implementing the programs. The response was very positive and there is a genuine commitment and concern by the company field representatives and at the company headquarters level to help livestock producers deal with noxious weed problems.

The California Dept. of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) was contacted to assist us in developing research and monitoring guidelines, we also requested CDFA to be the lead agency for projects which require special permits. The USDA Western Regional Research Center in Albany, Ca. was also contacted to determine bio-control agents that might be on the horizon and to obtain information on existing bio-control programs. Our contact with the ARS Lab - Albany exposed a

facility understaffed and underfunded. We also found that the 1998 FY federal budget contained no additional funds for Albany. CCA quickly teamed up with the California Native Plant Society, The Nature Conservancy, California Farm Bureau, and other western state cattlemen and farm bureau organizations to conduct an intensive Congressional lobbying effort which lasted several months. We pressured all members of the appropriations subcommittees in both houses as well as the full committees to support a funding increase for Albany to get it properly funded. While various versions of appropriations subcommittee and conference committee reports were shuffled around, we were assured by Congressional staffers that our message had clearly been heard and that we had succeeded in getting new funding for at least one more scientist. Unfortunately after the dust had settled, it turned out that our efforts and those of our Congressional friends were lost on ambiguity in the appropriations language that turned up no money for Albany. However, we were subsequently told that ARS-Washington was able to fund \$50,000 for a scientific assistant at Albany which will help some, and that a proposed 1999 FY ARS budget is already floating around which does contain the funding necessary to hire a least one more full-time scientist for Albany. CCA will again be looking to our traditional allies for help in making sure Albany does not get lost in the dust again this time around.

An outline of CCA's proposed Noxious Weed Pilot Program was subsequently sent to all local cattlemen's association's requesting input. The responses were few and apprehensive. So we took a step back to see what it was that we had overlooked. More questions arose: 1) How large an area was needed for a pilot program? 2) How do we protect private property rights while allowing access for monitoring? 3) What would be the investment of time, money, and lost grazing use to the volunteer member? 4) What would be the benefits of the program in increased forage availability?

I am now pleased to say that I can answer some of those questions. First, the desired total acreage needed is 50 - 100 acres (base acreage should be similar in topography and soil types). Second, for the pilot programs we have set up so far, we held meetings with all interested parties prior to visiting the problem sites. We answered as many questions as we could and discussed access before and after treatments; financial responsibility; special needs such as required equipment and labor; available forage before treatment measured for production potential; and desired and projected results after treatment.

Currently there are three pilot programs in place - in Yolo, Glenn and Inyo Counties. Dow-Elanco has been working with us on the pilot programs in Yolo and Glenn Co. using a product called "Transline" to control yellow starthistle. The monitoring has been completed for the first year in Yolo and Glenn Counties and "Transline" was quite effective. Control is estimated to be 99% and except for isolated outbreaks Transline's control of yellow starthistle brings hope that some day our ranges will recover. Dupont is working with us in Inyo Co. using "Tellar" for tall whitetop or perennial pepperweed. We are told that we can expect one treatment to control 90%-plus of the weed for up to 3 years. Tellar currently does not have rangeland application approval, however, the rangeland studies required are being done and Dupont is optimistic that the approval will be forthcoming within the next year. The pilot programs that we have implemented have been a very rewarding experience for all that have participated. Nate Dechoretz and his crew at CDF, Joe Di Tamaso - UC Davis, Tim Baldwin - Dow-Elanco, and Frank Aulgur - Dupont, have supported us and have been a pleasure to work with. Currently we are talking with Nate about doing a pilot program for Wild Licorice on City of L.A. DWP Land and Wild Iris on private property both in Mono County. Our plan is to treat the areas this spring if the weather cooperates.

The problems of noxious weeds along our highways is another story. The weeds are spreading to adjacent private, state, and public lands at an alarming rate. Recently two counties (Mendocino and Humboldt) have adopted county resolutions directing CalTrans to cease herbicide application on their rights of ways within their county. For those producers who raise alfalfa, grass, or other hay crops, there is a program which suggests weed free forage certification requirements for any hay being fed on BLM or USFS managed public lands. We have not yet seen the criteria for certificates of weed free forage, but one can be assured that if your field is adjacent to rights of ways or lands infested with noxious weeds the chances of qualifying weed-free are poor. For reasons such as this and that there are no proven alternative methods to control noxious weeds such as yellow starthistle, we cannot allow policies such as those in Mendocino and Humboldt counties to become state wide policies. Sheila Massey and I met with CalTrans in their state office early in 1997, Larry Shields and others from CalTrans assured CCA that they had no interest in seeing this policy expanded. We were also told that CalTrans would respond to local concerns if organized and directed through the agricultural commissioner.

The CCA range improvement committee has formed a CalTrans Coordinating Subcommittee and is forming local working groups at the county level to work with the agriculture commissioner and CalTrans to identify noxious weed priority areas. The local working groups are asking the agencies and signatory parties of the CINWCC to participate, we believe that this is a model which will replace meetings with treatment and control of invasive noxious weeds on California rangelands. The Range Improvement Committee is committed to maintaining private property rights while participating in the implementation of programs to control noxious weeds through out the state on adjacent State and Federal managed lands.

Finally, we need to collectively forge a much stronger coalition to work on a number of fronts in the fight against noxious weeds, including:

1. Immediately activate your grassroots letter-writing and telephone calling trees to urge your Congressional representatives and U.S. Senators to support adequate funding for Albany in the FY 1999 budget. Explain the devastating problem of noxious weeds in your area and urge that the ARS budget include at least \$800,000 in new money for the Albany lab. Believe me it's not too early to start your contracts now before the train leaves the station and any chance for a budget augmentation is missed!
2. Support CCA's legislative efforts this year to change the Department of Food and Agriculture's noxious weed classification system to focus more energy and resources on the weeds that are wreaking the greatest havoc rather than keeping them on a list of the "most hopeless" which don't receive priority attention. Then help with passage of the bill through your letters and phone calls.
3. COMMUNICATION - Call me or the CCA office and let us know what pilot programs you are interested in to determine where CCA's pilot programs could dovetail in the future. Share research or news articles you come across that report on new noxious weed control methods or products. Also contact me or the CCA office for information about our local working groups.
4. Be ever vigilant of where and what type of weed infestations are occurring, particularly on public lands. One idea would be to start a clearing house of

data, categorized by type of weed, location of the problem, size of the problem (acreage), damage occurring to resources, etc. This information can be extremely valuable in talking to local and state decision-makers. Also be sure to report any attempts to transport hay with noxious weeds from other states into California which you become aware of to your county Ag. Commissioner. Recently in Bishop, Ca., the county agricultural commissioner received a tip that hay from Nevada containing whitetop was going to be sold and transported into Inyo County. After several phone calls were made, the Nevada State Agriculture Dept. decided to implement a program to put a stop to this practice.

5. **OUTREACH** - We need to contact golf courses, airports, county park officials and others to determine the extent of their noxious weed problems. We need to make an effort to schedule appointments with local newspaper editors to discuss the problem and ask that they do a feature article, but we must be sure we present them with the facts about the extent of the problem in any one area. CCA is certainly willing to be part of the team that makes these editorial visits.

On behalf of the California Cattlemen's Association, I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to give you these remarks today. As stewards of our ranges, we are committed to reducing the spread of noxious weeds and leaving healthy rangelands for future generations to use. Please remember that our advancement on the noxious weed issue is rooted in the willingness of all affected interests to be a cooperative partner. CCA looks forward to building on the partnership we already have with many of you. Thank you.