

Economic Impact Assessment of Leafy Spurge in Manitoba

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Leafy spurge is a highly invasive plant species that thrives in many different conditions and situations. It is particularly invasive in native pastures and wild lands. It is also spread along roads, railways and utility lines. In 1999 the Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group, a broad coalition of agricultural and conservation groups and the three levels of government, undertook a collaborative project to assess the economic impact of leafy spurge in Manitoba. The outcome of the project was the Leafy Spurge Economic Impact Assessment – Manitoba 1999. At the time, the assessment found that (a) the net economic impacts associated was approaching \$20 million based on the direct and indirect losses of the reduced livestock grazing capacity of approximately 340,000 acres of infested grazing land and the estimated control costs for rights-of-way.

Ten years later, the rate of infestation (distribution) and the level of infestation of leafy spurge (density) continue to raise several serious concerns particularly from producers, land managers and policy makers. These concerns include the need to conserve prairie ecosystem biodiversity; the threat of spurge to species at risk; the amount of resources needed for leafy spurge early detection, management, or eradication; and, proposed adjustments to current public policies and legislation. In 2009, the Rural Development Institute, on behalf of the Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group, initiated an update of the economic impact on leafy spurge in Manitoba. This economic impact will utilize the 1999 Economic Impact Assessment as a starting point and update economic and geographic data. It will also use publicly available spatial and existing economic variables. On-going consultation with stakeholders will verify the accuracy and usefulness of the assessment. Dr. Derrek Eberts is conducting the economic analysis, Dr. Dion Wiseman is assisting with geographic data, and Ms. Karen Rempel is the project coordinator.

For more information on the project contact Karen Rempel (rempekl@brandonu.ca) or visit www.brandonu.ca/rdi



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