

Noxious Weed: LEAFY SPURGE (*Euphorbia esula* L.)



Photos by Tom Whitson, Roy Reichenbach

Growth Habitat: Perennial, erect, up to 3' tall, spreading by seed or creeping roots. One of the most serious noxious weed threats in Colorado.

Leaves: Alternate, long, narrow, ¼" wide and 2" long, usually drooping.

Stem: Branched near top, hairless, entire plant contains milky sap.

Flower: Inconspicuous, surrounded by large heart shaped floral leaves which turn yellow-green near maturity.

Roots: Can extend as deep as 30ft and are extremely wide spreading.

Seeds: Expelled up to 15' when capsules dry. They are viable up to eight years in soil. Peak seed germination generally occurs in May.

Management: Sheep or goats can be used to help control leafy spurge. Introduce sheep in early spring when weed is succulent. Goats will consume almost any time during the growing season.

Rotate pastures to prevent seed production and allow desirable forage plants to regain vigor. If livestock graze leafy spurge after seed formation, hold animals in a corral for at least seven days before moving to uninfested area.

Sheep or goats followed by fall herbicide treatment may be an effective, integrated means to use infested ground and control the weed.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture Insectary has four flea beetles (*Apthona nigricutis*, black-dot flea beetle; *A cyparissiae*, brown-dot spurge flea beetle; *A czqalinae*, black spurge flea beetle; and *A. flava*, copper spurge flea beetle) available for release.

Go to <http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/boulder/AG/agweeds.shtml> for more information about biocontrol methods.

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. Beck, K.G. Leafy Spurge. Publication 3.107. 2003.

For more details on invasive weeds visit:

<http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/boulder/AG/agweedsspecificweeds.shtml>