

CHECK YOUR LAND FOR SERICEA LESPEDEZA



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Sericea lespedeza has been a noxious weed for several years in the southeast corner of Nebraska and has become a noxious weed for the whole state of Nebraska. Sericea lespedeza is a prolific seed producer and birds can spread the seed. This weed has made a foothold in Nebraska, which contributed to it being named a noxious weed statewide. If we can keep it under control and from spreading further, maybe it won't be such a huge problem here in Nebraska.

The past several years there have been informational meeting about Sericea lespedeza. If you know you have it on your property or think you may have it, check it out and determine if this weed is present. It has shown up along roadsides, on CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) land, in pastures and in public parks. It is most common in pastures or rangeland, in areas that are left undisturbed by tillage. Sericea lespedeza was planted by some government agencies as cover and feed for wildlife and also for erosion control. Unfortunately it is a very invasive species and has taken over thousands of acres of rangeland in Kansas and a lot of public land and roadsides in Missouri. Although we have been aggressive in controlling Sericea Lespedeza over the years, I still received calls every year about it spreading along roadsides, to new pastures or CRP land in southeast Nebraska. With it being a prolific seed producer, deer and birds are responsible for spreading this weed across the region.

Sericea lespedeza can grow as tall as 4' under good growing conditions. It is a coarse plant with a dense growth of leaves along its stems and branches. In the vegetative stage cattle will eat it, but as it matures it becomes unpalatable to cattle because of high tannin content. As previously mentioned, it is a very prolific seed producer. It is extremely competitive, and it can crowd out desirable grasses and forbs. This plant has been identified in several locations in southeast Nebraska. Several images of Sericea lespedeza can be found at: https://www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+sericea+lespedeza&biw=1708&bih=778&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjEtmf67bNAhWMOj4KHf_uALUQsAQIGw&dpr=0.8#imgrc=E4XZhYyYifMM%3A.

If you have a weed growing on your property that you don't know what it is and think it may be Sericea lespedeza, bring it into your local Extension office so we can positively identify it. Chemical control has been popular and can provide effective control when applied during June and into early July when the plants are in a vegetative growth stage. Broadcast applications of Remedy at 1 to 1.5 pints/acre, PastureGard at 1.5-2 pints/acre or Surmount at 2.0 – 2.5 pints/acre should be applied in spray volumes of 10 to 20 gallons/acre for control. In the fall, products that contain the active ingredient metsulfuron are the most effective. For rangeland or pasture, the University of Nebraska recommends using Escort or Cimarron Plus. They tend to be more effective in late summer when Sericea lespedeza is actively blooming. Spot spraying options are also available. Herbicide treatments will need to be repeated on a two to four year cycle to keep Sericea in check. The key is to keep Sericea lespedeza from going to seed. If you prefer a non-chemical approach, grazing with goats has also been shown to be effective in controlling and reducing the spread of Sericea lespedeza. Research has also been done in other states with some success, to use fire followed by grazing to control Sericea lespedeza.

Since Sericea lespedeza is a noxious weed, non-control really isn't an option. With its large seedbank, it easily reestablishes and will need to be closely monitored. Left unchecked, Sericea lespedeza can take over a stand, reducing grazable acres considerably. There has been a 75% cost share program through the Five Rivers Weed Management Area for chemical and application costs of controlling Sericea lespedeza and some other invasive weeds. For information about this cost share program contact Bobbi Meints at fiverivers.meints@gmail.com or at (402) 869-2355.

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