

NEWS

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WET SPRING FUELS GROWTH OF NOXIOUS WEEDS

Custer, SD- The wet spring of 2005 in the Black Hills National Forest will go into the books as an ideal climate for noxious weed growth.

“We have had a lot of moisture this spring compared to what we have had over the last few years, and now with the warm temperatures we are going to get a real growth spurt on all vegetation, including the weeds,” said Craig Beckner, forest range management specialist.

Weed crews in from the forest’s four ranger districts and the forest contractor are planning to spend much of their time this season in timber sale areas. It’s the sale of timber in the forest that generates revenue to finance much of the noxious weed program.

“Probably the largest program this year is on the Northern Hills Ranger District (Spearfish, SD), which has a lot of sales with some big acreage in them,” Beckner said.

Noxious weeds love to make their home where the soil is disturbed whether it’s from recreational activities or timber harvests. “Wherever timber harvesters pile the slash and or the sticks they take to the lumber yard is also considered ground disturbance, and we concentrate our spray area there,” said Gene Bolka, Mystic Ranger District noxious weed coordinator.

The forest has no shortage of Canada thistle, a weed that South Dakota farmers know can hurt crop production. “Two Canada thistle per square foot in a field reduce barley or small grain yields by over 30 percent,” said Ron Moehring, South Dakota Department of Agriculture weed and pest supervisor.

Moehring understands the Black Hills National Forest has a unique situation when it comes to spraying for weeds. “The terrain makes it a little tougher to apply chemical applications, and in a lot of instances the biological controls we have for some of the weeds don’t do as well in shade as the weeds do,” said Moehring.

Forest Service crews out spraying also have to consider sensitive plants. “We do have sensitive plants we have to work with, and of course, we adapt accordingly. We can work in a sensitive plant area and not even touch that particular plant,” Bolka said.

The forest plans to work well into the fall season to make up for the cool spring days that didn’t allow for chemical spray operations. All in all, crews plan to treat approximately 11,000 acres this season to assist in the war against noxious weeds.

The Black Hills National Forest reminds visitors to the forest to comply with its weed-free forage order. The order applies to everyone, but will be of special interest to those who use pack and saddle stock, such as horse owners, outfitters, ranchers with grazing permits, hunters, and contractors. The order requires that all hay, cubed hay, straw, mulch and other products be certified as weed-free by a sanctioned certification program.

You can read the entire weed-free forage order by visiting the following web address:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills/news/2005/06/forageuse.shtml>.

For more forest information, visit the Black Hills National Forest website at
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills/news/>.

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Interviews:

Craig Beckner, Forest Range Management Specialist

“Very conducive growing conditions right now. We have had a lot of moisture this spring compared to what we have had over the last few years and we’ve now with the warm temperatures we are going to get a real growth spurt on all the vegetation including the weeds.”

“Probably the largest program this year is on the Northern Hills District out of Spearfish. They just have a lot of sales that have some big acreage in them.”

Gene Bolka, Mystic Ranger District, Noxious Weed Coordinator

“Wherever they pile the slash and or the sticks they take to the lumber yard and all that it is also considered ground disturbance and we concentrate our area of spraying towards that.”

“We do have sensitive plants that we have to work with and of course we adapt accordingly. There are ways we can work in a sensitive plant area and not even touch that particular plant.”

Ron Moehring, South Dakota Department of Agriculture, Weed & Pest Supervisor

“Two Canada thistle per square foot in a field reduce barley or small grain yields by over thirty percent.”

“The terrain is a little tougher to get chemical application in there and in a lot of instances bio control we have for some of the weeds doesn’t do well in shade where the weeds do.”