



# Lancaster County Weed Control

## January 2012

[www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds](http://www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds)

### Weed Risk Assessment

#### Sericea Lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*)

The Nebraska Invasive Species Advisory Council recently completed the Assessment of the weed



risk potential of *Lespedeza cuneata* in Nebraska. **This is the first step in the process to designate a noxious weed.** This assessment was prepared to improve our understanding of the risk of invasion by *Lespedeza cuneata* in

Nebraska while still in the early invasion stages. The Weed Risk Assessment (WRA) is designed to aid and support in identifying potential risk species for early detection and rapid response.

#### U.S. Distribution and Status

*Lespedeza cuneata* was initially planted in the United States at the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station. In the 1920s and 30s, sericea lespedeza was grown and planted for erosion control and mine reclamation but was not widely utilized as a pasture species until the 1940s. In 1985, sericea lespedeza was planted with native grasses on crop land retired as part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In 2003,



sericea lespedeza infested an estimated 8.6 million acres of the United States. About 15% of the U.S. tallgrass prairie region was infested. As of 2005, it was estimated that sericea lespedeza occupied 5,501,400 acres of the mid- to southern Great Plains. Lancaster County has approximately 20

documented infestations of sericea lespedeza, with only 4 of them not being intentionally planted.

#### Spread Potential

*Lespedeza cuneata* is present and considered invasive/weedy in 31 states, and is a noxious weed in Kansas and Colorado. It is also considered weedy in Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa. It was first introduced into the U.S. in 1896, and the oldest NE record is in 1974 in Richardson County. Sericea lespedeza was initially used as hay crop which helped facilitate its spread throughout the eastern United States. It is also readily spread by wildlife species and livestock.

#### Impact Potential

Established *lespedeza cuneata* plants will reduce or eliminate competing vegetation. When sericea lespedeza becomes established, it restricts the amount of

light reaching other plants. Its tall, upright growth with multiple branches and dense foliage produces heavy



shading. Although originally introduced as a forage plant, it has stems that become tough and unpalatable unless kept continually mowed or grazed. In grass, it usually becomes the dominant species after 3-4 years.

### February Planned Activities

- 1 FSA Annual Meeting on Weed Control
- 6 Commons Meeting Annual Report & Plan
- 6-9 NWCA Conference @ North Platte
- 9 Mid-year budget review retreat
- 10 NE Invasive Species Council
- 16 UNL Extension Private Applicator Training
- 20 Holiday
- 21 LPWMA
- 23 Problem Resolution Team
- 25 Monthly activity report
- 28 Invoice to City of Lincoln