

Palmer Amaranth Earns “Noxious” Weed Status in Iowa Why Should Landowners Care?

In some circles it has been called Iowa’s “Super Weed” because it has become so invasive in both crop land as well as CRP. Palmer amaranth, a native to the southwest U.S. has demonstrated its ability to adapt to Midwest conditions and continues to be found throughout Iowa. First identified in Iowa in 2013 and then in 2016 it was found on some CRP acres that had been seeded to native prairie, such as pollinator and wildlife plantings. Last month, Governor Branstad signed into law (HF 410) that Palmer amaranth is to be considered a noxious weed. The law goes into effect on July 1, 2017 and it will require landowners to get approval from their local FSA office before taking on control strategies on CRP acres.

Characteristics of this annual broadleaf weed explains why the concern. Palmer grows extremely fast and can reach a height of 6-8 feet. It produces a great amount of seed, up to 250,000 seeds from one plant that can germinate over a long period of time – weeks, months and years. It also can be toxic to livestock AND has developed resistance to many different herbicide chemistries. On cropland it is a yield robber, with documented yield losses reported up to 90% in corn and 80% in soybeans

As a landowner you need to be proactive in preventing the spread of Palmer by checking crop fields, fence lines, ditches and any CRP you may have. If you or your farmer identifies the weed on your property, it should be reported to your county extension personnel so that it can be documented and control measures can be developed. As for controlling this weed in CRP, hand roguing generally is the best option (it’s not fun but if you’re looking for fresh air and exercise ... have at it). Mowing can be done although regrowth still produce seeds and, you can spot spray in years one through three. The primary change in control options is if you have documented that Palmer is in your conservation areas, you can broadcast apply herbicides. Before doing this you must certify that there are at least 100 Palmer amaranth plants in that area. There may be cost share money available for the herbicide products used and in EXTREME cases; a landowner may be able to terminate their contract. NRCS has a good webpage as a resource for landowners regarding all of this: [Palmer amaranth in CRP](#).

Should you be concerned that your recently seeded conservation acres were seeded with contaminated seed? The source of contaminated (Palmer amaranth) seed has been identified as coming from southern states where the plant is widely distributed. To protect yourself in the future, buy seed from local sources and ask your seedsman what they have done to ensure Palmer-free seed. You can also send a sample of the seed to Iowa State University Seed Lab for testing. They are able to detect any contamination.

Don’t abandon your conservation plans but be vigilant on the quality and purity of the seed you plant.



Seeds of Palmer amaranth



Immature Plant



Fully Mature