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Delaware Noxious Weed Committee Meeting

A meeting of the 2018 Delaware Noxious Weed Committee was held at the Delaware of Department of Agriculture, 2320 South DuPont Hwy, Dover, DE on February 8, 2018 with the following in **attendance**:

Kenny Bounds, Deputy Secretary, Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA)
Dr. Faith Kuehn, Plant Industries Administrator, (DDA)
Todd Davis, Noxious Weeds Environmental Program Manager, (DDA)
Blake Moore, Noxious Weeds Environmental Scientist II, (DDA)
Dr. Mark Van Gessel, Extension Weed Scientist, University of Delaware
Jay Lester, Farmer, New Castle County representative
Bryan Melvin, Farmer, Kent County representative
Geri McClimens, Plant Industries Administrative Assistant, (DDA)

Absent: Fred West III, Farmer, Sussex County representative

Call to Order/Introductions: Chairman Todd Davis called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., welcomed everyone in attendance, and had everyone introduce themselves. Todd gave a short report on dealing with Palmer amaranth in 2017. The weed is spreading throughout the state and a few farmers are having difficulty controlling this herbicide resistant weed pest. Many farmers are having success controlling this weed and reducing the spread of the weed.

Remarks: **Deputy Secretary Bounds** told everyone he appreciated them being here and thanked everyone for their participation. Kenny asked if we are monitoring the bird feed industry for noxious weeds. We know it is a possible way for weed seed to enter the state. We have not had any issues at this point. Kenny asked if drones could be used to assist in detecting noxious weeds. Todd and Mark agreed that drones are not that specific at this time to separated weeds by species, only as a weed. Kenny asked about what the surrounding states are doing about Palmer. Pennsylvania has added Palmer amaranth to its Noxious Weed Law. Maryland has invited Todd to a meeting in regards to adding Palmer amaranth to its Noxious Weed Law. Kenny offered to help however he can.

Plant Industries Administrator Remarks: Dr. Faith Kuehn – Faith asked if the message about Palmer amaranth was being sufficiently delivered to the Delaware farming community. Todd, Blake, and Mark have presented on Palmer at many different meetings and have also visited with farmers one on one in order to help spread this message. Jay and Bryan both are familiar with Palmer amaranth but Bryan expressed the need to help farmers identify Palmer amaranth in the field. Faith suggested that Palmer amaranth and Texas panicum be added to Delaware’s Seed Law. She suggested this due to the fact that we have been getting Palmer amaranth contaminated seed used on our roadsides and we need recourse to prevent this in the future. Mark expressed concern about being able to identify Palmer amaranth when compared to other pigweeds because of the similarity in seeds. The solution would be sending sample to be genetically tested for positive id of Palmer amaranth.

Weed Science Updates: Dr. Mark Van Gessel – University of Delaware Weed Scientist – Palmer is still spreading; it is not one of those weeds that will be able to be contained. While Palmer has not stopped spreading, the rate of spread has slowed. Palmer is spread through a variety of mechanisms such as moving equipment and grain around the state. A number of states have taken Delaware’s lead and have put Palmer amaranth on their Noxious Weed Lists. Pennsylvania was just approved a few months ago. He then asked if Maryland had had their meeting yet. See Kenny’s Remarks. Mark states that integrated weed management strategies are a major help in reducing herbicide resistant weed populations.

County Noxious Weed Updates: Sussex County- Fred West: absent. **New Castle County- Jay Lester:** Jay is not seeing much Palmer amaranth in New Castle County and asked Mark how far north it has been found. Mark stated that Palmer amaranth has been found in Pennsylvania and New Jersey so the threat to New Castle County is there. Palmer amaranth management was discussed in detail. Jay brought up the topic of how many seeds Palmer amaranth produces. Mark stated that each plant can produce from 500,000 seeds up to 1 million.

Jay spoke about upcoming Dicamba training throughout the state. Applicators wishing to use Dicamba as part of their weed management strategy must take this training. Jay expressed concern about precision sprayers and potential problems with missing spots in the field. When using this technology, it is imperative to take time to make sure the field is properly set up and covered.

Jay asked about the status of Burcucumber throughout the state. It is not as much of an issue since weed management technology has improved since Burcucumber was added to the noxious weed list. Canada thistle is still a major issue in New Castle County. Last year was an especially bad year for thistle due to weather and farmers not being able to get out and cut their hayfields in a timely manner. Jay expressed concern with open spaces in developments becoming inundated with Canada thistle. Developers are making a better effort at making usable open spaces so that the weeds are not allowed to take over. Johnsongrass remains an issue around the refinery near Delaware City.

Kent County- Bryan Melvin: Palmer amaranth is prevalent in southern Kent County and less so the farther north the county goes. Farmers for the most part know about Palmer and are aware of the challenges they face when managing it. Bryan asked about the potential for Palmer amaranth being in seed when small grains are ready to be harvested. Mark stated that, in this area, Palmer amaranth will not have set seed by the time small grains are to be harvested. Bryan has used cover crops to help with weed management and while has seen some benefits, has also seen an increase in slug pressure.

On the topic of Dicamba use, Bryan expressed concern that it is too risky to use in parts of Kent County for various reasons. Specifically to him, he has neighboring greenhouses, animal production, and golf courses that Dicamba drift could damage. Bryan stated that being able to work most of your own acreage helps a ton with weed management and finding potential Palmer amaranth sites. While he may not always be able to work each acre, he tries to keep problem areas in mind in order to keep them under control.

Noxious Weed Unit Updates: Todd and Blake added to the discussion of the previous updates. The NWU sees successes and failures in weed management throughout the state. There is no one way to approach weed management and the NWU aims to provide the connections and information to the farmers so that they can be up to date on the latest technology and issues. Palmer amaranth is still the major issue with noxious weeds mainly due to the problem of herbicide resistance and how aggressively Palmer amaranth spreads. In field management of the other five noxious weeds is still mostly successful with common weed management practices. Open spaces in New Castle County are threatened by Canada thistle and NWU is working with land managers to make sure these issues are addressed.

Todd provided information on the Environmental Sweep Program that aims to remove harmful unusable farm chemicals from farms. This program is of no charge to the farmer. Environmental Sweep is an amnesty program which focuses on removing the chemical no matter whether it has been banned or not with no repercussions to the owner. Todd also reminded the committee that there is a pesticide jug recycling program offered by the Delaware Department of Agriculture's pesticide section. Cleaned pesticide containers can be dropped off at the Sussex Conservation District location on Shortly Road in Georgetown. The jugs will then be bailed and recycled. This program is free of charge.

Blake discussed the efforts made by DeIDOT to keep Palmer amaranth from infesting roadsides through contaminated seed. Certified Construction Reviewers are scouting for and pulling Palmer amaranth in road project plantings. NWU will continue to work with DeIDOT on this issue. Blake stated that there is a new push to have developments create usable open space which will then be more intensively managed to prevent noxious weeds and other invasive species from infesting those areas.

Meeting Adjourned