

Bug Bombs Away

Successful Biological Control of Inaccessible Leafy Spurge Infestations In South-central Idaho



The black dot flea beetle, a.k.a. *Aphthona nigricutis*, is an unlikely hero. Introduced in mass as “bug bombs,” their ability to effectively control infestations of leafy spurge in inaccessible areas of Idaho is proving remarkable.



Initially used in the Ramshorn Canyon area of the Big Lost River Valley in south-central Idaho, the 1997 introduction of beetles reduced the size and density of leafy spurge infestations by 90 – 95%.

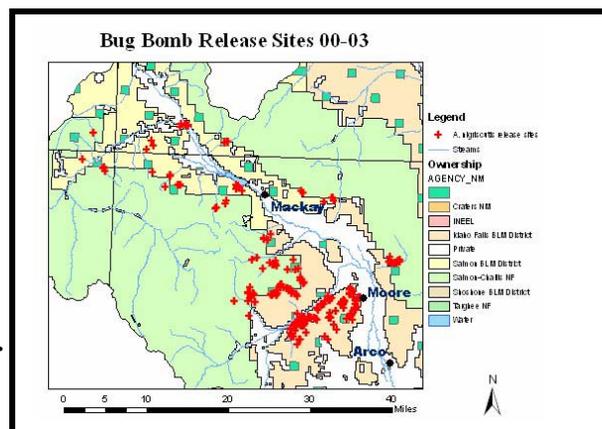


These two photos, taken in July 1997 (above) and July 2001 (right) illustrate the effectiveness of treating leafy spurge with the black dot flea beetle.

When the Lost Rivers Coordinated Weed Management Area formed in 2000, cooperators developed a strategy to inventory and treat additional infestations.

Since the steep and rugged terrain made herbicide applications infeasible, helicopter applications of the beetle bombs proved to be the best choice.

With federal cost-share assistance provided by the State & Private Forestry’s Cooperative Noxious Weed Program, aerial release bomb projects were performed from 2000 through 2003. Nearly 400 bug bombs released 1000+ beetles with each drop. Preliminary inventories of the release sites indicate the insects are well established, and already making an impact at many of the new treatment sites.



**USDA
Forest
Service**



NORTHERN &
INTERMOUNTAIN
REGIONS

STATE & PRIVATE
FORESTRY

*Forest
Health
Protection*

--
*Cooperative
Noxious
Weeds
Program*

Project Contact

Janet Valle
R1-R4 State &
Private Forestry
(801) 625-5258
jvalle@fs.fed.us

JANUARY 2005