



Leafy Spurge: "Leafy spurge, a noxious weed common on millions of acres in states north of New Mexico's border, is spreading rapidly in the state" said a New Mexico University range scientist. However, it seems to be a serious problem only in North America where it infests 2.5 million acres, mostly in southern Canada and the northcentral United States. It has been reported to cause severe irritation to the mouth and digestive tract in cattle which may result in death. "Leafy spurge is an aggressive invader that can squeeze out native plants on New Mexico's rangelands," said Kirk McDaniel, with NMSU's Agriculture Experiment Station (AES). "Outside New Mexico, annual economic losses due to reduced forage for livestock and wildlife range from \$2.6 million in Wyoming to \$ 76.3 million in North Dakota." Recreational and ecological losses may be even greater. As early as the 1910's, leafy spurge was recognized as a potential weed problem in North America, particularly in cool, moist areas. It was first discovered in New Mexico along streamsides and in high elevation pastures in the late 1980s. The weed can severely irritate the mouths and digestive tracts of cattle, sometimes causing death. The plant's seed pods explode when dry, often projecting seeds as far as 15 feet. These seeds can live in the soil for up to 8 years before germinating. Most patches are located in mountain pastures and riparian areas, and are less than 5 acres in size. Leafy spurge can spread quickly. For example, in North Dakota, an estimated 20,000 acres were affected in 1962, 40,000 acres in 1973, 86,500 acres in 1982, and nearly 1.2 million acres in 1990.