

China lettuce a challenging weed for many wheat farmers

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

When Albert Adjesiwor started in his job as a University of Idaho Extension weed scientist last year, he drove around the region and saw the weed China lettuce in just about every wheat field.

“It’s very widespread,” he said, noting it’s particularly prevalent in no-till farming systems, primarily in the western U.S.

China lettuce is a winter annual that emerges in the fall. It is also known by other names, including horse thistle and compass plant, because its lower leaves turn to face the sun. A single plant can generate up to 46,000 seeds, which can survive up to three years in the soil.



Courtesy of Albert Adjesiwor
Albert Adjesiwor is a weed scientist and University of Idaho Extension specialist based in Kimberly, Idaho.

The weed is most susceptible to herbicides before emergence and at heights less than 3 inches tall, Adjesiwor said.

Farmers should prevent

seed production by using pre-harvest or post-harvest spraying.

Growers should not plant into existing stands of China lettuce.

Adjesiwor also urged farmers to diversify their weed control practices, noting that weeds adapt to any practice used repeatedly. It is resistant to Group 2 and Group 4 herbicides.

Herbicides have varying degrees of effectiveness. One requires the maximum label. Others aren’t as effective when it’s too hot and the humidity is low. Adjesiwor recommends splitting these applications into two or three passes.

Growers should contact Adjesiwor for more information or if they suspect they have herbicide-resistant China lettuce. He is based in Kimberly, Idaho.

Adjesiwor spoke May 17 during the Idaho Wheat Commission’s new “Farm Chat” online discussion series.

Dairy Checkoff targets Generation Z

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press



Jordan Maron, a.k.a. Captain Sparklez

Rosanna Pansino

Dairy Management Inc. and its state and regional Dairy Checkoff partners have long recognized the importance of the next generation as future consumers. Now they’re zeroing in on Generation Z — youths between the ages of 10 and 23.

“We know based on research that this is a generation that is truly setting themselves apart,” Barb O’Brien, DMI president, said in virtual press conference on Monday.

“From what we know about how this generation wants to change the world, they’re changing expectations of brands and how they’re willing to spend their money on brands that are doing good and doing right in their view, it can have an enormous impact on dairy as well as other categories,” she said.

They also have a philosophy of balance when it comes to food, feeding their body what it needs and what it craves, she said.

They have also grown up online and have information at their fingertips, she said.

“They’re digitally savvy and are willing to share their data in exchange for a more personalized experience, personalized content and recommendations meant just for them,” she said.

Kids today are bombarded with opinions on which foods to eat, what’s good and bad for them, on social media and from celebrities and friends, said Anne Warden, DMI executive vice president of strategic integration.

They also have so many more choices and are more disconnected from where their food comes from than ever before, she said.

“That leads to growing questions about whether dairy is good for the animals, whether it’s good for the environment,” she said.

It is critical to make sure they understand milk and dairy contain unparalleled nutrition, are made with care and have a taste that can’t be matched, she said.

Generation Z is changing how companies market

their products and exists almost entirely online, she said.

“And we know they’re really cognizant of whether companies and brands are doing good things for consumers beyond just making money,” she said.

They’ll turn against products that don’t match their values or desire for authenticity, she said.

“So part of why we’re focused on Gen Z is because they are having a massive impact on how businesses operate. And we’re going to have to be really adept at communication with them in order to support dairy’s long-term future,” she said.

DMI is activating three programs in the next two months to connect dairy’s story to the Gen Z audience.

One program is tapping into Gen Z’s love of gaming to capture their attention and show how dairy products fit well with gaming and meet their wellness needs, she said.

To do that, DMA is partnering with gaming influencers Jordan Maron (known to his fans as CaptainSparklez) and Rosanna Pansino. The project is called “Beat the Lag” with the message that dairy foods can give gamers an energy boost and a tasty pick-me-up during long stretches of gaming, she said.

The campaign started a week ago and has already had 3 million views.

DMI has also partnered with GoNoodle to take the Fuel Up to Play 60 program into the virtual space with a new game.

It’s also tapping into young dairy farmers to interact with Gen Z on social media, such as TikTok and Instagram, and will debut a video on June 1 showing the fun and entertaining side of young dairy farmer, she said.

Company lays groundwork for gene-edited hemp

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

A biotechnology company has taken a key step toward genetically editing hemp with an eye toward easing large-scale production of the crop.

Calyxt, a Minnesota-based plant technology firm, has transformed the hemp genome to provide a “proof of concept” that the crop can be altered with its TALEN method of using “gene scissors,” said Sarah Reiter, its chief business officer.

“For us, it’s sort of a dream crop. It also needs a ton of improvement to reach that potential,” Reiter said.

Achieving a more uniform plant height, reducing the amount of psychoactive THC compound and enhancing the size and consistency of seed are among the traits that Calyxt will now try to develop in hemp, she said.

The company expects to concentrate more on fiber and grain production than the plant’s CBD content, she said. Cannabidiol, or CBD, is an extract that’s popularly used for its healthful properties.

“We’re happy to work with them to utilize our technology but it’s not our immediate focus,” Reiter said of

the hemp CBD market.

If the crop’s height is less variable, it would be easier to harvest. Lowering the THC content would prevent hemp from testing above the 0.3% regulatory threshold for marijuana, which remains illegal under federal law.

Apart from improving the quality of seed, the company also wants to encourage seeds to mature at the same time to maximize yield.

The process of developing those traits is expected to take three to five years for hemp, which the company typically achieves by deleting a gene to “up-regulate” other functions, Reiter said.

Hemp presents an exciting opportunity because it can produce fiber with less water and pesticides than cotton while also generating oil that can be used for biodiesel, she said.

“It’s also a great protein. It makes more protein than soy,” Reiter said.

Even so, the crop is “notoriously reluctant” to being gene-edited due to the complexity of its genome and such characteristics as female plants that develop male flowers, she said.

“There is a lot of complexity to any change you’re try-



Capital Press File

A hemp plant.

ing to make,” she said.

Calyxt plans to develop traits in breeder seed, which partnering hemp companies can then cross-pollinate with other varieties or multiply for the commercial market, Reiter said.

“The functionality could help wherever hemp is going,” she said.

Calyxt was incorporated in 2010. The company is also developing gene-edited soybeans, oats, wheat and alfalfa.

According to Calyxt, during the first quarter of 2021, the publicly traded firm had a net loss of \$10 million on \$4.4 million in revenues, compared to an \$11 million loss on \$2.4 million in revenues at this point last year.

The hemp industry is seeking consistent genetics and predictable outcomes, partic-

ularly since seed developed in the U.S. tends to be highly variable, said Beau Whitney, an economist with Whitney Economics who tracks the crop.

“Because they’re hybrids of marijuana strains, they’re unpredictable in terms of testing above 0.3% THC,” he said.

However, European seed companies are supplying hemp for the fiber market that’s reliably low in THC and otherwise has predictable traits, he said.

It appears Calyxt wants to speed up the process for bringing U.S. strains to an equivalent consistency with those from Europe, Whitney said. “That’s compelling but the proof is in the pudding.”

The company’s information about transforming the hemp genome is “extremely vague” but its history of developing herbicide resistant traits is likely “bad news,” said Bill Freese, science policy analyst for the Center for Food Safety, a nonprofit that’s critical of federal biotech oversight.

Herbicide-resistant crops can spur the growth of weeds that also resist them, requiring more to be sprayed, he said.

Governors zero in on broadband access

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

Western states are making progress in providing broadband internet service to more rural residents, proponents say.

The Western Governors’ Association discussed broadband during the Western Prosperity Roundtable — a new platform they established to work on policies to increase prosperity throughout the region.

One of the sessions on access to broadband internet featured a panel from the federal and state governments, tribes and service providers. They examined how large investments in broadband infrastructure are being deployed and what needs to be done to enable everyone — including rural residents — to work, learn and receive medical care from their homes.

According to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 17 million Americans do not have a basic broadband internet connection. Broadband service is not available on 20.9% of tribal lands and 17.2% of rural areas.

While 95.6% of U.S. households have access to basic broadband, only 68.5% subscribe to services at that level or above.

Kathryn de Wit, project director of the Broadband Access Initiative with the

Pew Charitable Trusts, said her team has spent the last three years looking at how states are responding to the digital divide.

“What we found through the course of that research is that states are not only doing quite a bit, they’re doing quite a bit well,” she said.

“They are establishing policy frameworks to create space for stakeholders to solve these problems. They are relying on statewide, regional and local planning,” she said.

They are not only building buy-in and creating strategies but are also building the expertise of community leaders to make sure they have the resources and knowledge to participate in community-led initiatives and public-private partnerships, she said.

States are committing significant amounts of funding to broadband and committed historic amounts last year during the pandemic and economic recession, she said.

“States are also evaluating their progress — are they making the impact that they had intended? How do they adjust their policy and approaches in order to meet these goals?” she said.

“They really are trying to apply lessons learned to ensure that they are being effective stewards of public funds,” she said.

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