

Control of diffuse knapweed is vital

By "SLIM" KERR

The biological control of diffuse knapweed is of real interest to landowners in at least five counties.

The weed is mainly a problem on rangeland, but it is spreading into hay and pasture land.

Diffuse knapweed was first identified by Nels Anderson, Morrow County Agent, in 1951. In the 20 years since that time it has spread and probably severely infests 50,000 acres of range land in the Columbia Basin.

Chemical control of diffuse knapweed is effective if all of the infested area is sprayed regularly over a 3 - 4 year period. This has proven to be impractical due to cost and the problem of everybody agreeing and participating in a spray program. New areas are isolated infestation should certainly be sprayed with 2,4-D since 100 per cent control by biological means will never be obtained.

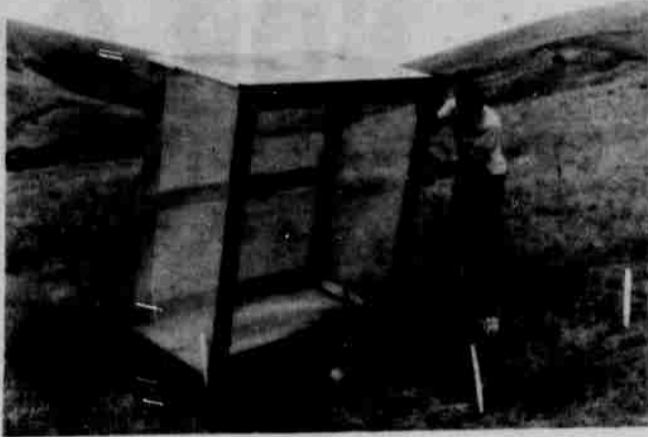
The small European fly (*Urophora affinis*), which was released last spring in Morrow County as a cooperative project between the Extension Service and the Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District, is our only hope of getting reasonable control of the diffuse knapweed.

The tiny fly, just slightly larger than a mosquito, emerges from infested seed heads and lays eggs in budding new plants two or three days after emerging. This may continue for as long as three weeks. Each female is capable of laying 120 eggs during her three-week life time. The eggs develop into a larva in three or four days and enter the interior of the budding knapweed seed head. Some larva pupate and produce a new generation the same year; however, the majority reach maturity and stay within tiny galls found within the seed pod. This causes sterility of that seed head and therefore reduces the potential for reinfestation of the weed, which usually behaves as an annual.

In Europe, 80 per cent control has been obtained.

This should make it understandable that we will need to continue to spray diffuse knapweed with effective

chemicals if we will ever hope to eradicate the problems. Hopefully a combination of the use of chemicals and a biological control will help control a serious range weed problem.



Harold Kerr, Morrow County Agent, released the small European fly for biological control of diffuse knapweed.

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