

Iowa Noxious Weeds and the Iowa Weed Law

Chapter 317, Code of Iowa, 1997

317.1 Noxious weeds.

The following weeds are hereby declared to be noxious and shall be divided into two classes, namely:

1. Primary noxious weeds, which shall include quack grass (*Agropyron repens*), perennial sow thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), bull thistle (*Cirsium lanceolatum*), European morning glory or field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), horse nettle (*Solanum carolinense*), leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), perennial pepper-grass (*Lepidium draba*), Russian knapweed (*Centaurea repens*), buckthorn (*Rhamnus*, not to include *Rhamnus frangula*), and all other species of thistles belonging in genera of *Cirsium* and *Carduus*.
2. Secondary noxious weeds, which shall include butterprint (*Abutilon theophrasti*) annual, cocklebur (*Xanthium commune*) annual, wild mustard (*Brassica arvensis*) annual, wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) biennial, buckhorn (*Plantago lanceolata*) perennial, sheep sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) perennial, sour dock (*Rumex crispus*) perennial, smooth dock (*Rumex altissimus*) perennial, poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), wild sunflower (wild strain of *Helianthus annus* L.) annual, puncture vine (*Tribulus terrestris*) annual, teasel (*Dipsacus*) biennial, and shattercane (*Sorghum bicolor*) annual.

The multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) shall not be considered a secondary noxious weed when cultivated for or used as understock for cultivated roses or as ornamental shrubs in gardens, or in any county whose board of supervisors has by resolution declared it not to be a noxious weed. Shattercane (*Sorghum bicolor*) shall not be considered a secondary noxious weed when cultivated or in any county whose board of supervisors has by resolution declared it not to be a noxious weed.

317.2 State botanist.

The secretary of agriculture shall appoint as state botanist the head of the botany and plant pathology section of the Iowa agricultural experiment station whose duty shall be to co-operate in developing a constructive weed eradication program.

317.3 Weed commissioner---standards for noxious weed control.

The board of supervisors of each county may annually appoint a county weed commissioner who may be a person otherwise employed by the county and who passes minimum standards established by the department of agriculture and land stewardship for noxious weed identification and the recognized methods for noxious weed control and elimination. The county weed commissioner's appointment shall be effective as of March 1 and shall continue for a term at the discretion of the board of supervisors unless the commissioner is removed from office as provided for by law. The county weed commissioner may, with the approval of the board of supervisors, require that commercial applicators and their appropriate employees pass the same standards for noxious weed identification as established by the department of agriculture and land stewardship. The name and address of the person appointed as county weed commissioner shall be certified to the county auditor and to the secretary of agriculture within ten days of the appointment. The board of supervisors shall fix the compensation of the county weed commissioner and deputies. In addition to compensation, the commissioner and deputies shall be paid their necessary travel expenses. At the discretion of the board of supervisors, the weed commissioner shall attend a seminar or school conducted or approved by the department of agriculture and land stewardship relating to the identification, control, and elimination of noxious weeds.

The board of supervisors shall prescribe the time of year the weed commissioner shall perform the powers and duties of county weed commissioner under this chapter which may be during that time of year when noxious weeds can effectively be killed. Compensation shall be for the period of actual work only although a weed commissioner assigned other duties not related to weed eradication may receive an annual salary. The board of supervisors shall likewise determine whether employment shall be by hour, day or month and the rate of pay for the employment time.

317.4 Direction and control.

As used in this chapter, "*commissioner*" means the county weed commissioner or the commissioner's deputy within each county. Each commissioner, subject to direction and control by the county board of supervisors, shall supervise the control and destruction of all noxious weeds in the county, including those growing within the limits of cities, within the confines of abandoned cemeteries, and along streets and highways unless otherwise provided. A commissioner shall notify the department of public safety of the location of marijuana plants found growing on public or private property. A commissioner may enter upon any land in the county at any time for the performance of the commissioner's duties, and shall hire the labor and equipment necessary subject to the approval of the board of supervisors.

317.5 Weeds in abandoned cemeteries.

The commissioner shall control the weeds growing in abandoned cemeteries in the county as needed. Spraying for control of weeds shall be limited to those circumstances when it is not practical to mow or otherwise control the weeds.

317.6 Entering land to destroy weeds---notice.

In case of a substantial failure by the owner or person in possession or control of any land to comply with any order of destruction pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, the county weed commissioner, the weed commissioner's deputies and employees acting under the weed commissioner's direction shall have full power and authority to enter upon any land within their county for the purpose of destroying noxious weeds. Such entry may be made without the consent of the landowner or person in possession or control of the land but actual work of destruction shall not be commenced until five days after the service of a notice in writing on the landowner and on the person in possession or in control of the land. The notice shall state the facts as to failure of compliance with the county program of weed destruction order or orders made by the board of supervisors and shall be served in the same manner as an original notice except as hereinafter provided. The notice may be served by the weed commissioner, the weed commissioner's deputies or any person designated in writing by the weed commissioner and filed in the office of the county auditor. Provided, however, that service on persons living temporarily or permanently outside of the county may be made by sending the written notice of noncompliance by certified mail to said person at the last known address to be ascertained, if necessary, from the last tax list in the county treasurer's office. Where any person, firm or corporation owning land within the county has filed a written instrument in the office of the county auditor designating the name and address of its agent, the notice herein provided may be served on that agent. In computing time hereunder it shall be from the date of service as evidenced on the return or if made by certified mail, from the date of mailing as evidenced by the certified mail book at the post office where mailed.

317.7 Report to board.

Each weed commissioner shall for the territory under the commissioner's jurisdiction on or before the first day of November of each year make a written report to the board of supervisors. Said report shall state:

1. The name and location of all primary noxious weeds, and any new weed which appears to be a serious pest.
2. A detailed statement of the treatment used, and future plans, for eradication of weeds on each infested tract on which the commissioner has attempted to exterminate weeds, together with the costs and results obtained.
3. A summary of the weed situation within the jurisdiction, together with suggestions and recommendations which may be proper and useful, a copy of which shall be forwarded to the state secretary of agriculture.

317.8 Duty of secretary of agriculture or secretary's designee.

The secretary of agriculture or the secretary's designee is vested with the following duties, powers and responsibilities:

1. The secretary or the secretary's designee shall serve as state weed commissioner, and shall co-operate with all boards of supervisors and weed commissioners, and shall furnish blank forms for reports made by the supervisors and commissioners.
2. The secretary or the secretary's designee may, upon recommendation of the state botanist, temporarily declare noxious any new weed appearing in the state which possesses the characteristics of a serious pest.
3. The secretary or the secretary's designee shall aid the supervisors in the interpretation of the weed law, and make suggestions to promote extermination of noxious weeds.
4. The secretary or the secretary's designee shall aid the supervisors in enforcement of the weed law as it applies to all state lands, state parks and primary roads, and may impose a maximum penalty of a ten dollar fine for each day, up to ten days, that the state agency in control of land fails to comply with an order for destruction of weeds made pursuant to this chapter.

317.9 Duty of board to enforce.

The responsibility for the enforcement of the provisions of this chapter shall be vested in the board of supervisors as to all farm lands, railroad lands, abandoned cemeteries, state lands and state parks, primary and secondary roads; roads, streets and other lands within cities unless otherwise provided.

317.10 Duty of owner or tenant.

Each owner and each person in the possession or control of any lands shall cut, burn, or otherwise destroy, in whatever manner may be prescribed by the board of supervisors, all noxious weeds thereon as defined in this chapter at such times in each year and in such manner as shall be prescribed in the program of weed destruction order or orders made by the board of supervisors, and shall keep said lands free from such growth of any other weeds, as shall render the streets or highways adjoining said land unsafe for public travel.

317.11 Weeds on roads---harvesting of grass.

The county boards of supervisors and the state department of transportation shall control noxious weeds growing on the roads under their jurisdiction. Spraying for control of noxious weeds shall be limited to those circumstances when it is not practical to mow or otherwise control the noxious weeds.

Nothing under this chapter shall prevent the landowner from harvesting, in proper season, the grass grown on the road along the landowner's land except for vegetation maintained for highway purposes as part of an integrated roadside vegetation management plan which is consistent with the objectives in section 314.22.

317.12 Weeds on railroad or public lands and gravel pits.

All noxious weeds on railroad lands, public lands and within incorporated cities shall be treated in such manner, approved by the board of supervisors, as shall prevent seed production and either destroy or prevent the spread of noxious weeds to adjoining lands. Gravel pits infested with noxious weeds shall not be used as sources of gravel for public highways without previous treatment approved by board of supervisors.

317.13 Program of control.

The board of supervisors of each county may each year, upon recommendation of the county weed commissioner by resolution prescribe and order a program of weed control for purposes of complying with all sections of this chapter. The county board of supervisors of each county may also by adopting an integrated roadside vegetation management plan prescribe and order a program of weed control for purposes of complying with all sections of this chapter. The program for weed control ordered or adopted by the county board of supervisors shall provide that spraying for control of weeds shall be limited to those circumstances when it is not practical to mow or otherwise control the weeds.

The program of weed control shall include a program of permits for the burning, mowing, or spraying of roadsides by private individuals. The county board of supervisors shall allow only that burning, mowing, or spraying of roadsides by private individuals that is consistent with the adopted integrated roadside vegetation management plan. This paragraph applies only to those roadside areas of a county which are included in an integrated roadside vegetation management plan.

317.14 Notice of program.

Notice of any order made pursuant to section 317.13 shall be given by one publication in the official newspapers of the county and shall be directed to all property owners.

Said notice shall state:

1. The time for destruction.
2. The manner of destruction, if other than cutting above the surface of the ground.
3. That unless said order is complied with the weed commissioner shall cause said weeds to be destroyed and the cost thereof will be taxed against the real estate on which the noxious weeds are destroyed.

317.15 Loss or damage to crops.

The loss or damage to crops or property incurred by reason of such destruction shall be borne by the titleholder of said real estate, unless said real estate shall be sold under contract whereby possession has been delivered to the purchaser, in which event such purchaser shall bear such loss or damage, excepting where a contract has been entered into providing a different adjustment for such loss or damage.

317.16 Failure to comply.

In case of a substantial failure to comply by the date prescribed in any order of destruction of weeds made pursuant to this chapter, the weed commissioner or the deputies may, subsequent to the time after service of the notice provided for in section 317.6 enter upon the land and cause the weeds to be destroyed, or may impose a maximum penalty of a ten dollar fine for each day, up to ten days, that the owner or person in control of the land fails to comply. If a penalty is imposed and the owner or person in control of the land fails to comply, the weed commissioner shall cause the weeds to be destroyed. If the weed commissioner enters the land and causes the weeds to be destroyed, the actual cost and expense of cutting, burning or otherwise destroying the weeds, along with the cost of serving notice and special meetings or proceedings, if any, shall be paid by the county and, together with the additional assessment to apply toward costs of supervision and administration, be recovered by an assessment against the tract of real estate on which the weeds were growing, as provided in section 317.21. Any fine imposed shall be recovered by a similar assessment.

317.17 Additional noxious weeds.

The board of supervisors shall order the weed commissioner, or commissioners, to destroy or cause to be destroyed any new weeds declared to be noxious by the secretary of agriculture, the cost of which shall be borne by the county.

317.18 Order for destruction on roads.

The board of supervisors may order all noxious weeds, within the right-of-way of all county trunk and local county roads to be cut, burned or otherwise controlled to prevent seed production, either upon its own motion or upon receipt of written notice requesting the action from any residents of the township in which the roads are located, or any person regularly using the roads. The order shall be consistent with the county integrated roadside vegetation management plan, if the county has adopted such a plan, and the order shall define the roads along which noxious weeds are required to be cut, burned or otherwise controlled and shall require the weeds to be cut, burned or otherwise controlled within fifteen days after the publication of the order in the official newspapers of the county or as prescribed in the county's integrated roadside vegetation management plan. The order shall provide that spraying for control of noxious weeds shall be limited to those circumstances when it is not practical to mow or otherwise control the weeds.

317.19 Road clearing appropriation.

The board of supervisors may appropriate moneys to be used for the purposes of cutting, burning, or otherwise controlling weeds or brush within the right-of-way of county trunk roads and local county roads in time to prevent reseeding or in a manner consistent with the county's roadside vegetation management plan, if the county has adopted such a plan. The moneys appropriated shall not be spent on spraying for control of weeds except in those circumstances when it is not practical to mow or otherwise control the weeds.

The board of supervisors may purchase or hire necessary equipment or contract with the adjoining landowner to carry out this section.

317.20 Equipment and materials---use on private property.

The board of supervisors may appropriate moneys for the purpose of purchasing weed eradicating equipment and materials to carry out the duties of the commissioner for use on all lands in the county, public or private, and for the payment of the necessary expenses and compensation of the commissioner, and the commissioner's deputies, if any. When equipment or materials so purchased are used on private property within the corporate limits of cities by the commissioner, the cost of materials used and an amount to be fixed by the board of supervisors for the use of the equipment shall be returned by the county treasurer upon the collection of the special assessment taxed against the property. In the certification to the county treasurer by the county auditor this apportionment shall be designated along with the special tax assessed under section 317.21. The equipment and its use are subject to the authorization and direction of the county board of supervisors.

317.21 Cost of such destruction.

When the commissioner destroys any weeds under the authority of section 317.16, after failure of the landowner responsible to destroy such weeds pursuant to the order of the board of supervisors, the cost of the destruction shall be assessed against the land and collected from the landowner responsible in the following manner:

1. Annually, after the weed commissioner has completed the program of destruction of weeds by reason of noncompliance by persons responsible for the destruction, the board of supervisors shall determine as to each tract of real estate the actual cost of labor and materials used by the commissioner in cutting, burning, or otherwise destroying the weeds, the cost of serving notice, and of special meetings or proceedings, if any. To the total of all sums expended, the board shall add an amount equal to twenty- five percent of that total to compensate for the cost of supervision and administration and assess the resulting sum against the tract of real estate by a special tax, which shall be certified to the county auditor and county treasurer by the clerk of the board of supervisors, and shall be placed upon the tax books, and collected, with interest after delinquent, in the same manner as other unpaid taxes. The tax shall be

due on March 1 after assessment, and shall be delinquent from April 1 after due unless the last day of March is a Saturday or Sunday, in which case the tax becomes delinquent from the following Tuesday. When collected, the moneys shall be paid into the fund from which the costs were originally paid.

2. Before making any such assessment, the board of supervisors shall prepare a plat or schedule showing the several lots, tracts of land or parcels of ground to be assessed which shall be in accord with the assessor's records and the amount proposed to be assessed against each of the same for destroying or controlling weeds during the fiscal year.

3. Such board shall thereupon fix a time for the hearing on such proposed assessments, which time shall not be later than December 15 of the year, and at least twenty days prior to the time thus fixed for such hearing shall give notice thereof to all concerned that such plat or schedule is on file, and that the amounts as shown therein will be assessed against the several lots, tracts of land or parcels of ground described in said plat or schedule at the time fixed for such hearing, unless objection is made thereto. Notice of such hearing shall be given by one publication in official county newspapers in the county in which the property to be assessed is situated; or by posting a copy of such notice on the premises affected and by mailing a copy by certified mail to the last known address of the person owning or controlling said premises. At such time and place the owner of said premises or anyone liable to pay such assessment, may appear with the same rights given by law before boards of review, in reference to assessments for general taxation.

317.22 Duty of highway maintenance personnel.

All officers directly responsible for the care of public highways shall make a complaint to the weed commissioners or board of supervisors, if it appears that the provisions of this chapter may not be complied with in time to prevent the blooming and maturity of noxious weeds or the unlawful growth of weeds or marijuana, whether in the streets or highways for which they are responsible or upon lands adjacent to the same.

317.23 Duty of county attorney.

It shall be the duty of the county attorney upon complaint of any citizen that any officer charged with the enforcement of the provisions of this chapter has neglected or failed to perform the officer's duty, to enforce the performance of such duty.

317.24 Punishment of officer.

Any officer referred to in this chapter who neglects or fails to perform the duties incumbent upon the officer under the provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

317.25 Teasel, multiflora rose, and purple loosestrife prohibited---exceptions.

A person shall not sell, offer for sale, or distribute teasel (*Dipsacus*) biennial, the multiflora rose (*rosa multiflora*), purple loosestrife (*lythrum salicaria*), or seeds of them in any form in this state. However, this section does not prohibit the sale, offer for sale, or distribution of the multiflora rose (*rosa multiflora*) used for understock for either cultivated roses or ornamental shrubs in gardens. This section also does not prohibit the sale, offer for sale, or distribution of varieties of the purple loosestrife (*lythrum virgatum*) when used for ornamental gardens, and which are sterile or nonaggressive according to a list published by the state weed commissioner pursuant to chapter 17A. A person engaged in the business of selling purple loosestrife shall keep accurate records, as specified by the department of agriculture and land stewardship, of each variety of purple loosestrife sold, offered for sale, or distributed. The person shall allow the department of agriculture and land stewardship to inspect the records during regular business hours. Any person violating the provisions of this section is subject to a fine of not exceeding one hundred dollars.

317.26 Alternative remediation practices.

The director of the department of natural resources, in cooperation with the secretary of agriculture and county conservation boards or the board of supervisors, shall develop and implement projects which utilize alternative practices in the remediation of noxious weeds and other vegetation within highway rights-of-way.