

INVASIVE SPECIES IN NEBRASKA

What is an invasive species?

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, or other organisms that are introduced to a given area outside their original range and cause harm in their new home. Because they have no natural enemies to limit their reproduction, they usually spread rampantly. Invasive alien species are recognized as one of the leading threats to biodiversity and impose enormous costs to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other human enterprises, as well as to human health.



- The cost to control invasive species and the damages they inflict upon property and natural resources in the U.S. is estimated at **\$137 billion** annually.

Invasive Species in Nebraska: A Quick Look

Nebraska has been invaded by a number of harmful exotic plants and animals. Here is a quick look at some of the worst current and potential invaders:

Name	Type	Origin	Extent	Damage
Zebra mussel	Mollusk	Caspian Sea region of Asia; accidentally released into Lake St. Clair in 1988 in ship ballast water	Found in Missouri River in northeast NE, February of 2004	Voracious filter feeders that out-compete native animals; fouls boats & clogs intake pipes at power plants and municipal water sources
Dutch elm disease	Fungus	Asia; one strain of the disease arrived in the 1930s in Cleveland, OH on infected elm logs from Europe; a more virulent strain arrived in 1940s	American elm originally ranged in all states east of Rockies- most of this area is infested	Elms were once the nation's most popular urban street tree, have now largely disappeared from both urban and forested landscapes. It is estimated that "Dutch" elm disease has killed over 100 million trees.
West Nile virus	Virus	Uganda; first reported in NY and CT in 1999	Human cases have been recorded in all but 4 counties in NE	In 2003, Nebraska reported 1942 human cases and 29 deaths from WNV; virus has also killed horses and thousands of birds
Kudzu	Plant	Japan; brought over in the late 1800s for its edible, starchy root	Southern and southeastern Great Plains (NE, KS, OK, TX, & MO)	Hardy plant which out-competes native vegetation and spreads rapidly making it hard to control
Purple loosestrife	Wetland plant	Europe and Asia; introduced in 1800s as ornamental and medicinal plant or ship ballast water	In 2001 was declared a noxious weed throughout Nebraska	Displaces native wetland plants; has less food and habitat value for waterfowl and other wildlife

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European Starling	Bird	Eurasia & North Africa; introduced by industrialist who wanted to establish colonies of all birds mentioned in Shakespeare	Can be spotted in good numbers throughout the year in the whole state	Aggressive birds that out-compete with native birds for resources; large roosting numbers are nuisance and cause damage to buildings and agriculture

What Congress Can Do:

A. Make Prevention Our Top Priority

- Reverse current U.S. policy on the intentional import of live plants and animals, that is, switch from a “dirty” to a “clean” list approach that requires screening for invasiveness before import and which keeps out or limits import of species so as to prevent harm to native species or ecosystems – and make the legislative changes to do so.
- Substantially cut the unintentional introduction of aquatic invaders by overseeing federal standard-setting on the discharge of ballast water in the United States, supporting the development of technology to meet these standards; ensuring that agencies monitor and enforce compliance; and reauthorizing the 1996 National Invasive Species Act in the strongest and most comprehensive form.
- When considering, reviewing, or approving trade agreements, rigorously address invasive species, e.g., by allowing for restriction of imports of non-native species that are invasive elsewhere and by identifying pathways by which inadvertent introductions travel so that they may be interrupted.

B. Make Federal Agencies More Effective

- Use oversight authority to ensure that all federal agencies immediately and strongly implement that part of Executive Order 13112 that asks them to identify and reduce actions that introduce or spread invasive species in the United States or elsewhere.
- Appropriate adequate funds so that federal agencies have the resources to address invasive species problems promptly and comprehensively over the long-term.
- Strengthen the structure and leadership of the National Invasive Species Council and prompt more aggressive implementation of its National Management Plan.
- Oversee the work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure that the agency and its Administrator are committed to protecting biological diversity as well as agriculture.
- Evaluate the serious problems with border inspection for pests, weeds, and pathogens, e.g., in staffing and cross-department coordination, exacerbated by moving these functions into the Department of Homeland Security and amend its authorizing legislation if needed.

References:

How to Identify and Manage Dutch Elm Disease. http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_ded/ht_ded.htm#intro
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 Univ. of Nebraska Lincoln Purple Loosestrife Fact Sheet <http://nematode.unl.edu/loosestrife.htm>
 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Starling Fact Sheet http://nis.gsmfc.org/nis_factsheet.php?toc_id=212
 Univ. of Nebraska Lincoln Starling Fact Sheet <http://nematode.unl.edu/starling.htm>

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