



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: February 22, 2019

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 808

SHORT TITLE: WEED CONTROL - NOXIOUS WEEDS - REGULATIONS AND PENALTIES

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION:

House Bill 808 would amend the current noxious weed law to give the Maryland Department of Agriculture authority to determine which weeds should be on the noxious weeds list.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This bill is based on recommendations of 2018 Palmer Amaranth Summer Study.

Chapter 246 of 2018 (House Bill 515) required the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to conduct a study to:

1. assess the adverse financial impact of the invasive weed Palmer amaranth on the agricultural industry in the State; and
2. determine the necessary actions each stakeholder must take to reduce the impact of Palmer amaranth and the cost of each action.

Within the last decade, Palmer amaranth has become one of the most serious weed pests in the Southern and Midwestern United States. The invasive weed first became a problem in Maryland approximately five to six years ago. Initially limited to the lower areas of the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland, Palmer amaranth has rapidly spread throughout the shore and Southern Maryland, and into areas of Central Maryland.

Palmer amaranth is currently regulated by state noxious weed laws in:

- Delaware (2012)
- Minnesota (2014)
- Iowa (2017)
- Pennsylvania (2017)
- Ohio (2018)

The Maryland Noxious Weed Control Program is a part of the Plant Protection & Weed Management section at the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The purpose of this program is to control and eradicate designated noxious weeds in order to reduce their economic and aesthetic impact on farmers and landowners. Noxious weeds (Johnsongrass, shattercane, thistles) can cause losses in excess of \$25 million annually to Maryland agriculture due to reduced yields, decline in quality of crops and forages, and increased control costs. Increased expenses are also incurred for roadside and non-crop property management.

Current Prohibited Noxious Weeds – Maryland Noxious Weed Control Law
Annotated Code of Maryland Title 9, Subtitle 4. Weed Control

- Johnsongrass
- Shattercane
- Canada Thistle
- Musk Thistle
- Plumeless Thistle
- Bull Thistle

The Maryland General Assembly enacted the first Nuisance Weed Law on Johnsongrass in 1969. In 1975 and 1979, this law was amended. In 1984, the law was repealed, revised and consolidated with the Thistle Control Law. In 1987, the Nuisance Weed Law was rewritten and renamed the Noxious Weed Law (Title 9, Subtitle 4, Agriculture Article, Annotated Code of Maryland). The Multiflora Rose Management Law became effective on July 1, 1982.

MDA ASKS FOR A FAVORABLE REPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 808.

If you have additional questions, please contact Cassie Shirk, Director of Legislation and Governmental Affairs, at cassie.shirk@maryland.gov or 410-841-5886.