



# Acreage Living

June-July 2004

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*Acreage Living is published bimonthly. Please share it with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension Office to be placed on the mailing list or contact an ISU Extension staff member listed below to suggest topics for future articles.*

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## County weed commissioners keep noxious weeds under control

*by Joe Kooiker, Natural Resource Manager/Roadside Biologist/  
Commissioner, Story County Conservation Service*

Our rich, fertile Iowa soil not only produces high yields of soybeans and corn, it also produces bumper crops of weeds. In the old days, weeds could make or break a farmer. Today, even with high-tech herbicides, weeds can still cause economic loss to agricultural producers.

Noxious weeds are plants that have the potential to cause economic loss or threaten the biodiversity of our ecosystem. Canada thistle and purple loosestrife are examples. The weed law hasn't changed in 70 years and is in dire need of updating. Many noxious weeds that were a problem years ago are not a problem now.

Every county has a weed commissioner who can add weeds to his/her county's noxious weed list. For instance, I added purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, Eurasian water milfoil, and leafy spurge.

Most weed complaints lately have been associated with pasture lands and musk thistle. Other complaints typically involve folks who live outside the corporate city limits and want their neighbor to mow his/her grass in an adjacent vacant lot or yard. My job is to make sure that any noxious weeds on the property are controlled, which doesn't always involve mowing. Most problems are handled by one phone call. If not, the work can be hired out and charged directly or assessed during tax time to the landowner.

When it comes to landscaping, use native plants, otherwise you may plant a noxious weed in your county or in an adjacent county. Call your county weed commissioner with any questions. Go to [www.agriculture.state.ia.us/weedcommissioner.htm](http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/weedcommissioner.htm) for a list of county weed commissioners.

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## Appropriate fencing keeps livestock in place

by Russ BreDahl, ISU Extension Beef Forage Field Specialist

Fences are built for a variety of reasons. Those who live on acreages and farms often use fences as barriers to restrict livestock movement. These barriers may be physical, psychological, or both.

Physical barriers must be made from materials strong enough to prevent or discourage animals from going over, under, or through them. Wooden, woven wire, cable, and welded panel fences are examples of physical barriers. Psychological barriers inflict pain to discourage animals from challenging physical barriers that by themselves would not contain them. Electrified and barbed wire fences are examples of psychological barriers.

The higher cost of physical barrier fences may be justified in the following situations:

- Permanent fences
- Property boundaries
- Areas where animals will be crowded or excited
- Areas where you expect to introduce animals that are not used to fences
- Areas near stored feed or pesticides
- Wherever fence failure has a high cost in time, risk, or money

Electrified fences offer cost, ease of construction, and flexibility advantages in the following situations:

- Temporary fences

- Difficult terrain (around curves, over hills and valleys, through brush, across wetlands, etc.)
- Where animals are not crowded, excited, or spooked by dogs, coyotes, or humans
- Subdividing pastures for management-intensive grazing
- When you're experimenting to determine the best location for a more permanent fence

Two ISU Extension publications have information about livestock fencing costs.

***Estimated Costs of Livestock Fencing (FM 1855)***, [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/FM1855.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/FM1855.pdf)

***2004 Iowa Farm Custom Rate Survey (FM 1698)***, [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/FM1698.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/FM1698.pdf)

More detailed information concerning design specifications and materials, especially for physical barrier fencing and working facilities, is available in a series of handbooks developed by Midwest Plan Service. You can view and order these handbooks at your local ISU Extension office.

- ***Beef Housing and Equipment Handbook*** (MWPS-6)



- ***Dairy Housing and Equipment Handbook*** (MWPS-7)
- ***Horse Housing and Equipment Handbook*** (MWPS-15)
- ***Sheep Housing and Equipment Handbook*** (MWPS-3)

You can read more about electrified and non-electrified fences with high-tensile wire in ***High-Tensile Wire Fencing*** (NRAES-11). Order this publication from NRAES, 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Ithaca, N.Y. 14853-5701, [www.nraes.org/publications/nraes11.html](http://www.nraes.org/publications/nraes11.html)

***Fencing Systems for CRP Land*** (CRP-8) is an ISU Extension publication that includes information about how electric fencing works and reasons it fails. Ask your county Extension office for a copy, or go to [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/CRP8.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/CRP8.pdf)

For more information on selecting the proper fence type for different livestock species, see the October 2000 issue of ***Acreage Living***, [www.extension.iastate.edu/acreage/AL2000/aloc00.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/acreage/AL2000/aloc00.html).

## How to manage aquatic vegetation

by Joe Morris, ISU Extension Aquaculture Specialist

Aquatic plants range from algae to larger plants rooted in the pond bottom. Moderate plant growth is essential to ponds, but aquatic plants that interfere with a pond's intended use are weeds that need to be controlled.

An aquatic plant management plan incorporates prevention; biological, mechanical, and cultural controls; and aquatic herbicides.

**Prevention** – It is easier and less costly to prevent weed problems than it is to control them once they develop. Careful pond site selection, proper pond construction, and watershed practices are the first steps in preventing aquatic weed problems.

**Biological Controls** – Stocking grass carp is a practical, economical way to control submerged weeds with tender, succulent vegetation, e.g. coontail and water milfoil. The current stocking recommendation for Iowa ponds is four to five fish per surface acre; more numbers are

needed in ponds that have a rich and productive plant fauna. Complete control of aquatic plants by grass carp may result in an intense plankton algae population, causing intense green coloration in a pond.

**Mechanical Controls** – Various weed cutters and harvesters are available for canals and large reservoirs. It is not practical to use these machines in small fish ponds. Early removal of weeds by hand can be useful.

**Cultural Controls** – Cultural controls such as nontoxic dyes and Aquashade™ block sunlight, inhibiting submerged plant growth.

**Herbicides** – You can use appropriate aquatic herbicides for identified plants. Read and fully understand the package label before applying the herbicide. Consider the projected use of the treated water when selecting chemicals.

Treating aquatic plants with herbicides in the summer may cause fish kills due to decreased

oxygen levels associated with decomposing plants. The warmer the water is, the less oxygen that is available. It is best to treat only 25 to 30 percent of a pond at a time, waiting three to four weeks between applications during summer conditions. Applications made during late spring while water temperatures are relatively cool will reduce this risk.

Integrated plant management, using a combination of aquatic weed control methods, will achieve long-term weed control. The best long-term control is to intercept the flow of nutrients into the pond through modifications of land use practices or through the use of small buffer strips to filter runoff.

ISU Extension has a publication series (PM 1352) related to water quality, farm pond management, aquatic vegetation control, and pond measurements. These publications are available at [www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs) or from your county Extension office.

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## Safe handling of LP protects people and property

by Greg Brenneman, ISU Extension Agricultural Engineering Specialist

Liquefied Petroleum (LP) is commonly used by rural residents who do not have access to natural gas. While it is a safe fuel to use, like any fuel it can cause a fire or explosion if it is mishandled.

To prevent fires or explosions, it is important to keep equipment in good condition to prevent LP leaks. Unlike natural gas, telephone or electrical lines, which a utility company can locate, LP

lines and equipment are often the responsibility of the homeowner. You need to know where LP gas lines are located so you won't damage them when digging.

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Following are safety tips for using LP from the Propane Education and Research Council and the National Fire Protection Association.

- Never store or use propane gas cylinders larger than 1 pound inside your home.
- Learn what propane smells like. Propane retailers have pamphlets available with a scratch-and-sniff spot so your entire family can learn to recognize the distinctive LP odor.
- If you detect a gas leak, immediately evacuate

everyone from your house and call your propane supplier or the fire department from your neighbor's phone. Do not remain in your house, use the telephone, or turn light switches on or off.

- Never operate a propane-powered gas grill inside your home.
- Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions when lighting a pilot light.
- Water can damage the internal safety mechanisms in the gas controls of an appliance. If you suspect that your appliance

controls have gotten wet, have a trained technician replace them immediately.

- Never tamper with your water heater controls. If the pilot light won't stay lit or the control knob doesn't turn easily, call a trained gas appliance service person.
- Never use gas ranges for home heating. Clean your range or stove surface frequently and keep flammable materials away from burner flames.



## Know the law before letting your pets run free

*by Linda Nelson, Dallas County Extension Education Director*

Sections 351.25 through 351.28 of the ***Iowa Code*** contain legal guidelines regarding a farmer's right to destroy unconfined dogs or cats. Local jurisdictions such as counties also may have regulations on the treatment of domesticated animals.

Any person or peace officer within his or her jurisdiction may kill any dog or cat that is not wearing a collar with a rabies vaccination tag attached. According to Section 351.27 of the ***Iowa Code***, a dog

wearing its rabies vaccination tag may be killed if caught in the act of "worrying, chasing, maiming, or killing any domesticated animals, fowl, or when such dog is attacking or attempting to bite a person." In addition, the dog's owner could be liable for damages.

Will the killing of an unconfined dog or cat always be lawful? An animal that is merely trespassing but has a rabies vaccination tag should be contained and the owners contacted. However, if it is not tagged, the law permits destruction of the animal.

In any situation in which the destruction of a dog or cat seems predetermined on done inhumanely under unreasonable circumstances, the killer may be liable for harm done and charged with a misdemeanor. It is important that the destruction is not an act of retaliation or that ignorance of the law is not used as an attempt to avoid the truth.

Allowing cats and dogs to run free in the country seems ideal for pets. The risk to dogs, in particular, may be greater than acreage owners want to take. Protect your dog by having it vaccinated for rabies. Be

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sure to attach the tag to your dog's collar.

It is great fun for dogs to chase animals such as sheep and chickens. Their nature is to attack

and kill when they chase. If you have neighbors with animals that might entice your family dog, you should consider confinement methods that protect your family pet from death and you from legal woes.

*Legal information for this article was provided by John Baker, an attorney for Iowa Concern.*

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## Property surveys protect landowners from lot line disputes

*by Bill Denton, ISU Extension Master Gardener/Acreage Owner*

Planning a new building or fence can be a nightmare for landowners if a lot line is not where they thought it was. A line of trees or a stone fence serves as a simple lot line indicator for many people when making a property purchase. However, a survey may show the real property line is a distance from those physical markers.

Typically when you buy a property, particularly if it is financed, at the closing you receive a line drawing that shows the position of any dwellings on the lot and the lot lines. This information comes from the plat or property map on file in a county or municipality. It is not based on a full field survey. Issues with structures crossing property lines may not be noted. By *not* doing a full survey, major property line problems could be missed.

Title insurance only protects the buyer and lender from ownership issues or liens against the property *not found*, not property line disputes. Listed below are some steps to take before you purchase property to avoid property line disputes.

- Have the seller show you where the property lines are and have him/her walk the lines with you. Ask the owner if he/she has a full survey of the property to show you.
- Ask neighboring landowners about their perception of the property lines and if they know of any current disputes.
- Get a copy of the plat from the town or county and check the actual measurements.
- Consider having an experienced, licensed surveyor do a complete survey of your proposed purchase. This survey could save a lot of headaches and dollars in the future.

A complete property survey has definite advantages for a landowner.

- Usually monuments are put in the corners so you have a permanent record

showing the exact corners. Sometimes markers also are put in the boundaries between corners so landowners will know where a fence or trees can be placed.

- Many states require both physical monuments and a map drawn of the property. The surveyor documents on the map how he/she arrived at the measurements. This map then becomes public record.
- Surveys establish property lines and prevent future disputes with neighbors when building new structures or planting trees.
- You will have a complete survey when you sell your property or for estate planning.

Visit the following Web sites for more information:

[www.cffa-oswa.org/  
Glassford.html](http://www.cffa-oswa.org/Glassford.html)

[www.dcu.org/streetwise/homes/  
surv.html](http://www.dcu.org/streetwise/homes/surv.html)