Evaluation of Pre-Emergence and Stubble Treatments for Control of Dodder in Alfalfa Seed Crops

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DODDER (Cuscuta spp.) in alfalfa seed fields is a serious problem that is increasing in importance in all major alfalfa seed producing areas of the Western United States. This pest causes serious financial losses to seed growers by reducing alfalfa seed yields, increasing harvesting and seed cleaning costs, and lowering the quality and sale value of the seed. Harvey, et al. (8) reported that in 1951, in the south San Joaquin region of California, 86% of the rejections of seed lots of alfalfa submitted for certification were because of dodder. They stated that control of dodder can mean the difference between profit and loss in legume seed production. According to Menke (14), dodder is crowding a few hundred more acres out of alfalfa seed production each year in the Yakima Valley of Washington. In Utah dodder has spread rapidly in recent years and now infests, in varying degrees, a majority of the fields comprising the 50,000 acres now devoted to Utah's alfalfa seed crop valued at $3,000,000 annually.

Until recently, little progress has been made during the past 30 years in improving methods of controlling dodder, particularly after the infestation has become general over the fields.