



# Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage and Mulch Certification Standards

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is a growing demand in North America for the use of certified noxious weed seed free forage and mulch as a preventative program to limit the spread of noxious weeds. This voluntary certification program is designed to assure that forage (hay, cubes and pellets) and mulch sold with proper certification identification meets minimum standards designed to limit the spread of noxious weeds. Buyers are provided assurance that forage and mulch certified through this program meets these minimum standards.

The Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) has been designated under the Minnesota Noxious Weed Law as the official Noxious Weed Free Forage and Mulch Certification Agency in Minnesota by the Commissioner of Agriculture in consultation with the Director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station.

These certification standards are consistent with the North American Weed Free Forage Program standards developed by the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA). NAWMA has established minimum standards to allow uniform participation by states and provinces in the program. Forage and mulch certified by MCIA with proper certification markings attached will be eligible to be shipped into restricted areas in the United States and Canada where only forage certified under the North American Weed Free Forage Program can be used.

The various inspections and site visits that are an integral part of this program minimize the opportunity for misleading or fraudulent actions on the part of the applicants participating in the program. However, the production and distribution of certified material depends on the integrity of those participating in the program. The MCIA Board of Directors will act on any case where rules established by MCIA are knowingly or intentionally violated. Action taken by the Board of Directors may result in the suspension of membership in MCIA. Any applicant whose reputation is unsatisfactory will be refused field inspection and the privileges of MCIA.

It is the responsibility of every member of MCIA to abide by the rules, adhere to the standards, and report irregularities or violations.

## **APPLICATION FOR FIELD AND STORAGE SITE INSPECTION**

Applicants desiring to have their forage and/or mulch certified must apply to the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association on the application form supplied by the Association. Forms are available upon request from the MCIA office at 1900 Hendon Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108 or by calling (800) 510 - MCIA. Forms are also available at the MCIA website at [www.mncia.org](http://www.mncia.org).

Field inspection applications must be received four weeks prior to cutting. Late applications may result in the field inspection not being made. If such inspections can be arranged, a late application fee will be assessed.

A **field** is defined as the area occupied by one crop, covered by one inspection report and not divided by streams, public roads, other crops, or other barriers that materially increase the difficulty of inspection. If the certified forage or mulch field is also being inspected for certified seed production, indicate the corresponding seed production field number(s) on the application form.

A **storage site** is defined as **any** location where harvested certified forage or mulch will be stored pending sale.

## **FIELD AND STORAGE SITE INSPECTIONS**

To be eligible for forage or mulch certification, fields must be inspected by a representative of MCIA before harvest. A crop that is harvested prior to inspection is not eligible for certification. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the crop has been inspected before harvest.

Field inspection is a thorough examination of the forage or mulch production site to confirm compliance with the certification standards. A visual inspection of the field and entire field border will be made by the inspector. MCIA's inspection procedures will follow the guidelines established by the North American Weed Free Forage Program.

## **FIELD AND STORAGE SITE STANDARDS**

Forage, mulch and storage sites shall be free of those noxious weeds and undesirable plant species identified in **Appendix A**.

1. In Minnesota, forage, mulch and storage sites shall be inspected by MCIA.
2. Forage and mulch shall be inspected in the field of origin. The field shall include the surrounding ditches, fence rows, roads, easements, grass waterways, or a buffer zone surrounding the field.
3. The field and storage sites shall be inspected by MCIA within 10 days prior to cutting or harvesting.
4. Fields and storage sites which contain noxious weeds or undesirable plant species (as identified in **Appendix A**) may be certified if the following requirements are met:
  - a. The noxious weeds and undesirable plant species in the field in which the forage or mulch is being produced were treated to prevent seed formation or seed ripening to the degree that there is no danger of dissemination of the seed or the propagating parts of the plant capable of producing a new plant.
  - b. The noxious weeds and undesirable plant species were treated not later than the rosette to bud stage (or boot stage for grass species classified as weeds) prior to cutting or harvesting.
  - c. The treatment method can include but is not limited to:
    - Burning
    - Mowing or cutting
    - Roguing
    - Chemicals
  - d. If noxious weeds have not been treated and are present in areas adjacent to the field, an isolation/buffer strip must be established between the crop to be harvested and the area infested with noxious weeds. This strip must be no less than 10 feet wide. The strip may be established by mowing or cultivation.
  - e. Areas such as stack yards, storage sheds and/or bins, shall be inspected at the same time as the field and/or fields prior to stacking or filling them with certified product. These areas shall be free of noxious weeds and/or noxious weed seeds.
  - f. Fields that appear weedy or show poor crop practices, even though noxious weeds are not present, should not be certified. The inspector will document the problems and has the discretion to make this determination.
5. Pellets and pelleted milled feeds must be certified in the field of origin if heat is not used in the process. If heat is used in the processing, pellets and pelleted milled feeds may be certified based on official testing for weed seed viability at a laboratory designated by MCIA.
6. An Inspection Certificate shall be issued by MCIA indicating whether the above requirements have been met based upon field inspection. The Inspection Certificate shall include information as required by the North American Weed Free Forage Program.
7. Baling equipment must be cleaned of any noxious weed seeds prior to harvesting certified forage. If this is not possible the first three small square bales or the first large round or square bale produced shall be considered noncertified and will not be included as a part of a field unit's certified forage.

## **MAINTAINING IDENTITY OF HARVESTED FORAGE**

The applicant must keep accurate records of the amount of forage or mulch harvested from each field including where the product is stored after harvest. The following records must be maintained:

1. The number and average weight of bales harvested.
2. A description or map of the exact location where bales are stored.
3. Date of harvest.
4. Field number and location of the field where the product was produced.
5. Copies of all certification documents.
6. Current inventory records.

Records must be made available to MCIA for inspection upon request.

## **CERTIFICATION MARKINGS**

MCIA shall issue official certification tags to applicants with eligible forage or mulch. Products are not certified until the certification tags have been attached. Each certification tag shall be numbered with a unique serial number. Certification tags issued by MCIA shall meet all requirements of the North American Weed Free Forage Program. In addition, MCIA shall print the following information on each certification tag:

- Applicant's name
- Crop type
- Bale type
- Field number
- Inspection Certificate serial number

Applicants shall request certification tags by declaring the amount of forage or mulch harvested on the Inspection Certificate and submitting it to MCIA. Applicants shall attach tags only to bales harvested from the field indicated on the tag. Certification tags must be securely attached to eligible product before delivery to the buyer. **The transfer of certification tags not attached to eligible product is prohibited. Improper use or transfer of certification tags may result in the suspension or revocation of certification privileges.**

## **TRANSIT CERTIFICATES**

Transit Certificates are required when transporting forage into some states. It is the responsibility of those transporting products into restricted areas to request necessary documents. Upon request, MCIA will furnish transit certificates to producers of certified products. The Transit Certificates can be provided to buyers of certified products.

## **CERTIFICATION FEES**

Information regarding fees required for participation in this program is available on request from MCIA and is also available on the MCIA website ([www.mncia.org](http://www.mncia.org)).

## APPENDIX A

### Designated Noxious Weed or Undesirable Plant Species List

The following weeds have been designated as noxious or undesirable in the North American Weed Free Forage Program:

1. Absinth Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)
2. Bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*)
3. Buffalobur (*Solanum rostratum*)
4. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
5. Common burdock (*Arctium minus*)
6. Common crupina (*Crupina vulgaris*)
7. Common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*)
8. Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*)
9. Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*)
10. Dyers woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)
11. Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)
12. Hemp (marijuana) (*Cannabis sativa*)
13. Henbane, Black (*Hyoscyamus niger*)
14. Hoary cress (*Cardaria* spp.)
15. Horsenettle (*Solanum carolinense*)
16. Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale* L.)
17. Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*)
18. Jointed Goatgrass (*Aegilops cylindrica*)
19. Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)
20. Matgrass (*Nardus stricta*)
21. Meadow knapweed (*Centaurea pratensis*)
22. Medusa head (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*)
23. Miliun (*Milium vernale*)
24. Musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*)
25. Orange hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*)
26. Oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*)
27. Perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*)
28. Perennial sorghum (*Sorghum almum*)
29. Perennial sowthistle (*Sonchus arvensis*)
30. Plumeless thistle (*Carduus acanthoides*)
31. Poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)
32. Puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*)
33. Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria* L.)
34. Quackgrass (*Agropyron repens*)
35. Rush skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea*)
36. Russian knapweed (*Centaurea repens*)
37. Scentless chamomile (*Matricaria maritima*)
38. Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)
39. Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*)
40. Sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*)
41. Silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*)
42. Skeletonleaf bursage (*Ambrosia tomentosa*)
43. Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)
44. Squarrose knapweed (*Centaurea virgata*)
45. St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
46. Sulfur cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*)
47. Syrian beancaper (*Zygophyllum fabago* L.)
48. Tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)
49. Toothed spurge (*Euphorbia dentata*)
50. Wild Oats (*Avena fatua*)
51. Wild proso millet (*Panicum miliaceum*)
52. Yellow hawkweed (*Hieracium pratense*)
53. Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*)
54. Yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*)

Additional weeds designated as Prohibited Noxious Weeds under the Minnesota Noxious Weed Law:

1. Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
2. Grecian foxglove (*Digitalis lanata*)
3. Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)
4. Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)

## APPENDIX B

### APPLICANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Be a member of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association.
2. Complete the application for field and storage site inspection four weeks prior to cutting. Include:
  - a. A map indicating location of field.
  - b. A map indicating the location of storage area.
  - c. The field and storage site inspection fee.
  - d. Approximate cutting date.
3. Prepare the field for inspection. Treat noxious weeds and undesirable plant species (see Appendix A) in and adjacent to the production field as described in the standards. If noxious weeds in adjacent areas are not treated, a 10 foot wide isolation/buffer strip must be established by mowing or cultivation.
4. All fields must be inspected prior to harvest by MCIA to qualify for certification. Notify MCIA if your fields are within a week of cutting and you do not have an Inspection Certificate indicating that the field has been inspected!
5. If the field meets certification standards, proceed to Step 6. If the field does not meet the standards, proceed to the **Reinspection Procedures** below.
6. Maintain the identity of all forage or mulch harvested from fields meeting the certification standards. The forage or mulch must be stored in an inspected storage site separate from uncertified forage or mulch. A written record of certified material stored at this site must be maintained.
7. Request certification tags by completing and submitting the **Inspection Certificate** to MCIA. Report the number and size of the packages/bales from each eligible field. Remember to sign the **Inspection Certificate**.
8. Attach the certification tags provided by MCIA to eligible product.

### REINSPECTION PROCEDURES

(When a portion of field does not meet the certification standards - i.e.: untreated noxious weeds in the field and/or lack of required isolation/buffer strips.)

1. Make the required correction(s) as indicated on the Inspection Certificate.
2. Contact the MCIA inspector for reinspection to verify that the required corrections have been completed. A reinspection fee will be charged.
3. Proceed to Step 6 above.

### THE MINNESOTA CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES

MCIA will:

1. Supply each grower with instructions and materials for making applications for field and storage site inspection.
2. Inspect fields and storage areas.
3. Issue labels for product that qualifies under the certification standards.
4. Publish a directory of producers of certified noxious weed seed free products.
5. Maintain records including field applications, inspection reports and serial numbers of tags issued.