



USING CERTIFIED WEED-FREE FORAGE AND MULCH IN THE MIDWEST: A FACT SHEET FOR CONSUMERS

What are certified weed-free products?

Weed-free forage (hay) and mulch (usually straw) are produced throughout the country. Certified weed-free products have been inspected and confirmed to be free of the seeds of specific weed species. Each state in the Midwest has a certification program that is run by the state Crop Improvement Association, using standards developed by the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA).

Why use certified weed-free products?

When forage and mulch crops contain seeds of noxious weed or invasive plant species, those species can spread into areas where the forage or mulch is used, e.g. roadsides, trails, and natural areas that are being revegetated after a disturbance. By using products that are certified to be free of weed seeds, you can help prevent the introduction of harmful species and save money on future control costs.

Where can I get certified weed-free products?

If you would like to use weed-free products, start by contacting your state Crop Improvement Association. They can put you in touch with local growers who are enrolled in the certification program. The best way to ensure that weed-free products will be available when you need them is to contact a grower before the growing season starts, so that he or she can be sure to follow the procedures for weed-free crops and have the right type and quantity of weed-free products available for your needs.

How will I know which weed species have been excluded from my weed-free products?

NAWMA maintains a master list of species that may not be included in forage or mulch in order for the crop to be certified as weed-free. Each state also adds their state noxious weeds to the list. The NAWMA list can be found at www.nawma.org. Visit your state Crop Improvement Association's website (see below) to see additional species for your state. If there are particular species not on these lists that you would like to see excluded from the products you buy, you can contract directly with a grower to tailor the species list to your needs.

How will I know that the forage or mulch I buy has been certified as weed-free?

Certified weed-free products are labeled with a tag containing the words “North American Weed Free Forage Certification Program, Certified to the North American Standards”. Bales of certified hay and straw will also be labeled with purple and yellow twine issued by NAWMA.

How much do certified weed-free products cost?

The cost of weed-free products varies greatly from place to place and from year to year as with all crops. Contracting directly with a grower will allow you to negotiate a price that is acceptable to both you and the grower. Growers must pay fees to participate in the certification program, and those fees vary from state to state. When considering the costs and benefits of using weed-free products, keep in mind the money that you will save on control measures if you reduce the number of weeds being introduced in the first place.

For more information, please visit:

-North American Weed Management Association, www.nawma.org

-Crop Improvement Associations:

Illinois: www.ilcrop.com

Indiana: www.indianacrop.org

Iowa: www.agron.iastate.edu/ICIA/

Michigan: www.michcrop.com

Minnesota: www.mncia.org

Missouri: www.moseed.org

Ohio: www.ohseed.org

Wisconsin: www.wisc.edu/wcia/