

# ICIA Offers Weed Seed Free Forage & Mulch Certification

by Holly Ryan, ICIA

Iowa Crop Improvement Association's (ICIA) certified weed seed free forage and mulch program is still going strong since its inception five years ago. I had the chance to talk with one of our weed seed free forage and mulch growers, Pat Murken, from Story City. Pat stated that, "The program is well planned out and it encourages and addresses the need to produce a high quality product. The program also gives farmers a positive image to be viewed as professionals." This program is a voluntary certification program to assure that forage and mulch is free of noxious or undesirable weed seed. The program that is offered complies with the Weed Free Forage Standards developed by the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA).

The goal of this program is to

help Iowa farmers in meeting the growing demand in North America as a preventative program to limit the spread of noxious weeds. Iowa's weed seed free program is an additional marketing opportunity for hay and straw producers. Potential markets include customers seeking clean hay, people needing certified hay for their horses on visits to national parks, and contractors using straw for road construction erosion-control projects. Pat has seen a growing demand for his product since he joined. Pat cannot attribute the success of the farm to just himself. As he humbly declared, "This is a family effort - my wife and youngest son help me out."

The inspection of fields and storage sites within ten days of harvest assures that a designated list of 54 noxious weeds and undesirable plants are not present in a manner to disseminate seed or allow propagation of a new plant. Any noxious

weeds or undesirable plants near the field are isolated from the field by at least ten feet. Following harvest, the growers attach certification labels to the bales.

To help connect buyers and sellers, the association has lists of current sources, potential buyers, and sellers on their website. Visit the ICIA website at <http://www.agron.iastate.edu/icia> to view these lists and other information about the program.

Pat has encouraged others to join the program. "We need to continue to expand our market so we can sell more on a national basis. This program has helped me find a niche market and to see that there is a demand out there."

For more information about applying for field inspection or locating a certified forage or mulch producer, contact Kelly Iverson at ICIA (515) 294-6921, or [iowacrop@iastate.edu](mailto:iowacrop@iastate.edu).

**"Making Hay"**

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