



# Inside Ag

## April 2, 2008

### Bug of the Month *Oberea erythrocephala*



Leafy spurge is a highly invasive, deep rooted perennial that may cover meadows and grasslands with a dense monoculture of waist-high plants; choking out other vegetation and providing little or no forage for livestock.



Fortunately there are several biological control insects that are very effective at suppressing the invasion.

Most common are the leafy spurge flea beetles, but in some settings they are getting help from the red-headed leafy spurge stem borer, *Oberea erythrocephala* (big names for a small beetle). The stem borers

are in the family Cerambycidae (long horned beetles, named for their long antennae), and the adults are dark, elongate, active fliers while the larvae are pale yellow and spend their time within the stems of leafy spurge.

Adults are collected in June and July when they are actively seeking out spurge plants, where they lay eggs high in the stems. Larvae hatch and bore down through the stem to the root crown; seriously weakening the plant and stopping seed production. This insect does not reach high numbers and so will not provide control on it's own but may be very useful in combination with the spurge flea beetles.

