



# *Inside Ag*

## *September 3, 2008*

### **Bug of the Month**

### ***Aphthona* Beetles put a hole in Colorado's Leafy Spurge Infestations**



*Aphthona* beetles, aka leafy spurge flea beetles, have earned bug-of-the-month honors for a history of successes against leafy spurge in Colorado, as well as for the successes seen in 2008, following recent releases. As adults these beetles feed on the above-ground portion of the plant and can be found on leafy spurge foliage from late spring to mid summer. They lay eggs on the soil surface and their offspring dig into the soil where they find and feed on the roots. The root-feeding larvae do a tremendous amount of damage to the plants; not only by consumption of the extensive root system but by opening up the roots for invasion by soil microbes.

The Insectary collects and releases several hundred thousand adults every year. The beetles are collected in sweep nets and packaged in cardboard containers where their powerful jumps can be heard like diminutive popcorn popping, especially when it is warm. At some release sites the CDA is doing extensive monitoring to make certain that the beetles are doing their job. This program extends from mountainous leafy spurge sites near Meeker all the way out to the grasslands west of Hugo.

