

Ag Column
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Spray Winter Weeds in the Early Winter

Thanksgiving, hunting, and football are much more common topics this week than pasture weed control, but November and early December are often great times to target winter annual and perennial weeds. This will work for both pasture or hayfield weeds as well as those weeds in the home lawn.

Dr. Gary Bates, UT Extension Forage Specialist, says “While nuisances like buttercups are easily removed with herbicides, many producers don’t think about spraying weed killers until it is too late for spraying to be effective.” For control to be effective, weeds must be sprayed prior to bloom. The reason for this has to do with the mode of action of the herbicide which encourages rapid growth to the point of death. After bloom, weeds shift their energy toward seed production and away from growth.

One of the most common cool-season perennial weeds in both fields and lawns are buckhorn and broadleaf plantain. Some winter annual weeds that repeatedly cause problems are deadnettle, henbit, chickweed, and buttercup.

This time is great for herbicide application because of the growth stage of the weeds and the possibility of favorable weather. In late November, these weeds have had adequate time to germinate and begin to grow. Herbicides should be applied after three or four days of 60 F to insure that the weeds are actively growing. Bates recommends to wait for new growth if weeds have been severely damaged by recent frosts.

Make sure you positively identify the weed before selecting an herbicide. Some weeds like plantain can be easily controlled with 2,4-D while others may require an herbicide such as Grazon Next which offers newer chemistry.

Effective broadleaf weed control will mean killing all of your clovers, but there is a positive side. A late fall application of 2,4-D will allow re-establishment of clovers in late February. Clover seed persists in the seed bank for many years. With good spring rains, some clover will probably germinate, this can be improved by seeding new clover. If you are applying Grazon Next, you will need to wait until the spring of 2017 to re-establish the clover stand.

For good weed control, identify your weed, select the right herbicide, and properly time your application. For more information on sprayer calibration, herbicide mixing, or lawn weed control, contact your local Extension Office.