

Ag Column
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Drought Stressed Pastures and Lawns

We have sure enjoyed a very mild fall this year. While the temperatures have been great, our pastures and hayfields have continued to suffer from the lack of rain. Unfortunately, weeds usually fair better than our forage grasses in dry years.

Begin thinking now about spraying fields where the weed presence may be the greatest. The ideal time to spray will be during November through mid-December when temperatures are warm. You will get better results from a herbicide application if soil moisture improves, so waiting for a period of more regular rainfall would be wise.

November and 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.

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. 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.

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. If you have recently re-seeded a lawn or field, you should wait at least 30 days before spraying.

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.