

Ag Column
Chris Ramsey
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Weed Control Must Be Timely

This year, our cool season grasses were stunted by a freeze in the spring and dry conditions in April resulting in 50% reduction in hay yields for the first cutting. Extreme heat may impact the stands of our cool season grasses this summer. The rains have returned the past few days, but the rainfall doesn't last long in the soil with the summer heat. Plentiful rain can't overcome the impact of consecutive days over 90 F.

Plan now to control unwanted weeds in pastures and hay fields. For broadleaf herbicides to work properly, weeds must be actively growing to get the best result. An exception to this rule would be Tall Ironweed which can be controlled later in the season when flowering.

With the persistent dry years, many new weeds have begun to take over our pastures and hayfields. It is usually impossible to selectively control a grass weed in desirable grass forage. Some examples are Sweet Vernal Grass and Redtop with which many producers are all too familiar. The only option is to manage the field to minimize the spread of these weeds and renovate the field when necessary.

Johnsongrass, a summer perennial, has been around for many years. In pasture, cattle maintain some control of Johnsongrass by grazing thus preventing reseeding. The situation is much different in hayfields, but there is a chemical option available. Glyphosate, the chemical found in "Roundup" and many other generic products, can be applied through a wick applicator. Following the first hay cutting, Johnsongrass often grows much more rapidly than cool season grasses. With the difference in height, glyphosate can be wick applied without injury to cool season grasses.

Summer perennial broadleaf weeds are another problem for area livestock producers. June and July is the best time to control these weeds such as horse nettle, curly dock, ironweed, goldenrod, pokeweed, and others. Newer herbicides currently available offer the producer more control over these tough weeds. One of the newer herbicides is called Duracor. This herbicide offers a broad spectrum of control without the volatility of other herbicides.

Weeds with a woody or partially woody stem are another tough group of weeds to control. These weeds include brambles, multiflora rose, milkweed, dogbane and tree sprouts.

The life cycle of the weed, the maturity of the weed, soil moisture, herbicide selection, adequate soil moisture, and sprayer calibration all are factors in getting desirable results when controlling weeds. For more information about weed control, herbicide options or plans on how to build a wick applicator, call your local Extension office.