

WEED CONTROL IN PASTURES

I have occasion to walk through lots of pastures in the County. Many are productive and well maintained, while others are quite marginal and infested with a variety of weeds. Canada Thistle, Scotch Thistle, Teasel, Curly Dock, Gumweed, Knapweed, Poison Hemlock, Goatsrue and Whitetop appear to be the most common weeds observed. Obviously, there are others.

Without any effort to control these weeds, they simply spread and continually reduce the grazing value of pastures. Because of neglect, some local pastures are so badly infested with weeds they are virtually worthless. The traditional 2,4-D herbicide is effective on weeds such as Burdock and Dandelion, but newer formulations are proving to be fantastic where weeds have gotten out of control. Though somewhat pricey, these newer herbicides control the weeds, provide long lasting residual activity and improve animal performance because of higher forage production.

At a recent field day, I was again impressed with the results when using the Dow manufactured herbicides, ForeFront R&P, Chaparral and Milestone on rangeland and pastures. I have also been excited with successes when using Excort XP and Telar XP, distributed by DuPont.

All 3 of the referenced Dow herbicides contain aminopyralid as an active ingredient. This powerful molecule provides increased efficacy, as well as an improved environmental profile when compared with herbicides that use picloram. The result is long-lasting, broad-spectrum weed control for cleaner, more productive pastures.

Field trials have shown that ForeFront R&P, Chaparral, and Milestone controls near 90% of stated weeds and does so with little or no injury to desirable cool and warm season grasses. There are limited grazing restrictions for any class of livestock, including lactating dairy cows. These herbicides can be applied by ground or by air, mix well with other herbicides and stay in solution. None are federally Restricted Use Pesticides, so no license is required for purchase or application. They can also be applied up to water's edge, allowing producers to target tough species in previously untreatable areas. All have a wide window of application, extending through the fall season. There is a precaution on the label regarding forage treated with these herbicides and manure from animals that have consumed treated forage within the last three days. Consult the label for full details.

Excort XP and Telar XP herbicides are recommended for pastures, rangelands, CRP lands, fence rows, rights-of-ways and non-crop areas. These products should not be used on irrigation ditches. There are no grazing restrictions with these herbicides and neither requires a license for purchase and application. These herbicides should not be applied to new seedings of grass, and there is a potential of crop injury if label directions are not followed closely. These herbicides can be used early in the season when plants are green and actively growing. For Canada thistle, fall rosette is the most sensitive stage.

Canada thistle is a perennial plant with extensive spreading roots that rapidly form dense colonies. Vegetative shoots arise from adventitious buds located on the Canada thistle roots. This persistent plant also spreads by seed. In the fall, as the nights get colder, Canada thistle plants translocate sugars

to the roots. As such, systemic herbicides actually kill the roots and terminate the spread of the plants. Fall applications can be made as long as there is live Canada thistle foliage showing.

Many land owners will be spooked when they price these herbicides at their agricultural supply store, but recommended rates are only ounces per acre. In many cases, spot treatments will take care of much of the existing weed problem. That is especially true for weeds such as Canada thistle, Whitetop, and Knapweeds that spread by roots as well as seed. It also makes sense to use a pricey product that works, as compared to something that does not. Effective weed control continuously pays dividends. Always remember to follow directions on the label when using pesticides.