



6 TIPS FOR WEED CONTROL

Specialists offer pasture weed-control considerations.

by Kindra Gordon, field editor

Spring signals a new forage growing season ahead — and with it a new crop of pasture weeds. Purdue University specialists recently offered reminders for effective pasture weed control via a virtual field day and highlighted these considerations:

1. When is mechanical control on weeds an option? Mechanical works best if the goal is to clip weeds to help a desired forage species gain a growth advantage, says Bill Johnson, professor of weed science at Purdue University. He suggests mechanical weed control is most effective on annual broadleaf weeds that are mowed before viable seeds are produced.

2. How can producers reduce weed effects? Manage your forage stands to be as competitive as possible, advises Johnson. He explains that grazing management — and especially avoiding overgrazing — as well as managing soil fertility and soil health are important factors to

help minimize weed pressure within pastures.

3. When is it best to apply chemical control on weeds? Johnson emphasizes that the growth stage of the plant will dictate when a herbicide should be applied. Specifically, summer annuals respond best to chemical treatment in early summer. Perennial weeds, such as Canada thistle and horsenettle, are ideally sprayed in late summer or early fall. This is when those plants are “sending carbohydrates to their roots,” explains Johnson, which means the herbicide will be carried to the roots, as well.

4. What type of chemical product to use? That depends on

the type of weed being controlled. Johnson offers these guidelines:

- ▶ 2,4-D is effective on summer annual broadleaf weeds if they are sprayed before seedheads are produced;
- ▶ Dicamba is effective on thistles;
- ▶ Triclopyr is well-suited to woody-stemmed species such as multiflora rose and milkweed;
- ▶ Metsulfuron is effective on woody perennials; and
- ▶ Clopyralid, especially when mixed with 2,4-D, is especially effective on thistles.

5. Chemical applications take four to six weeks. From a 2020 research trial Purdue researchers conducted evaluating five different chemical treatments (such as 2,4-D and ProClova™) on common pasture weeds such as Canada thistle and curly dock, Johnson reports that at four weeks 60%-80% control was achieved, but at

Above: Some products allow animals to continue grazing, while others require a rotation interval, says Bill Johnson, professor of weed science at Purdue University.

six weeks 88%-95% control was achieved.

He also reports, however, that all five treatments showed new emergence of Canada thistle from rhizomes at six weeks after application, as well.

“A second application may be necessary,” Johnson says, for more effective, long-term control.

6. Read and follow product labels. Johnson notes that some products allow animals to continue grazing, while others require a rotation interval. Some herbicide products require a harvest restriction or withdrawal time before animals can be slaughtered. Because this varies with each product, Johnson urges producers to “read the labels.”

Editor's note: Kindra Gordon is a freelance writer and cattlewoman from Whitewood, S.D.