

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS FOR RANGE & PASTURE INPUTS

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Much like the crops in our fields, when invasive pasture weeds become established three things are certain:

THEY ARE GOING TO SPREAD OVER TIME

THEIR ABILITY TO OUTCOMPETE DESIRED GRASS WILL INCREASE

THEY WILL BECOME HARDER TO CONTROL



Taking note of pasture weed breakouts across the season is a good fundamental to put into practice.

This is because the early identification and treatment of unwanted vegetation is your best bet when it comes to turning back forage quality loss. Hopefully as your cattle have been at summer pasture, you've taken note of trouble spots that arise in high traffic, overgrazed, flooded or drought-pressured areas. Watch as well for those places where purchased hay was fed over winter that may have introduced some threatening weed species.



After we pinpoint weed issues, determining which control measures to take is the next step.

In some cases, pasture will recover with time and an assist from Mother Nature. But more often than producers may realize, restoring pasture to prime performance requires maintenance.

Pasture in relatively good condition may respond well to basic remediation such as pH adjustment, fertilizer and seeding. This activity done in the fall (or when need is high, a split application after first hay cutting then again in fall) will help establish healthier root systems and allow new growth to take hold before grazing.



When a pasture is overrun with unwanted vegetation, herbicide treatment can help deliver a more beneficial restoration.

By the same token, when your pasture or hayfields are exhibiting some obvious trouble areas, herbicide spot treatment can curb unwanted vegetation before losing more ground to weed encroachment.



One of the most common questions I'm asked relates to the timing of herbicide control.

The obvious recommendation is to spray when weeds are actively growing; however, this can be perplexing as pastures contain a variety of weeds ranging from summer and winter annuals to perennial weeds and biennial thistles. You'll want to identify the weeds of concern. From there we can consider treatment timing.

SUMMER ANNUAL

Summer annuals germinate from seed in the spring and produce seeds in late summer to repeat the cycle. These include broomweed, cocklebur, kochia, lambsquarters, pigweed, ragweed, and yellow foxtail. Herbicide control works best with active growth in early spring when plants are two inches tall and soil moisture is present. Fall application – a possible convenience during other pasture remediation work – is typically too late as most summer annuals will have completed their life cycle and gone to seed. If some of these weeds have germinated in late summer, a treatment may be warranted to prevent seed production.

BIENNIAL

Biennials such as common burdock, poison hemlock, bull thistle and musk thistle complete their life cycle over two growing seasons, germinating in year one then bolting and producing seed before extinguishing in year two. Treating active growth in an April to early June timeframe can offer more control across assorted weed challenges; however, fall treatment can be effective especially when there have been good growing conditions for seedlings and rosettes. Application after bolting, when stems are elongated, will present control challenges for biennials.

WINTER ANNUAL

Winter annuals typically germinate in the fall, overwinter as small plants then grow rapidly to produce seeds as temperatures warm in the spring – consuming a lot of water. These include annual ryegrass, buttercup, cheatgrass, chickweed, downy brome, henbit, marehail and wild oats. The seed banks of these grasses may last several years so control applications are best repeated for another year or two. The most consistent control of winter annuals is with fall application when plants are very small, particularly if there have been good growing conditions. Control can be gained through very early spring application – late March to early April – when winter annuals resume growth but before they bolt or go to seed.

PERENNIAL

Perennial encroachers such as brambles, Canada thistle, horsenettle, Johnsongrass, leafy spurge, multiflora rose and tall ironweed have a plant structure that allows them to live for more than one year. Good control is achieved with application between bud and bloom stages while effective woody brush control will rely on application to full, actively growing leaves. Early June is a good time to treat many perennials, which can coincide with treatments for spring annuals.

As a general rule, it is better to apply a spring application early (instead of too late) so long as soil moisture is present and growth is underway. In the fall, application can be effective so long as your pasture isn't too dry or stressed and plants are still growing. These timings also provide the most economic herbicide options for the broadest spectrum of weeds.

As always, read and follow all label directions and take note of the grazing restrictions related to your herbicide selections.



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For specific application rates, directions, mixing instructions and precautions, read the product label. Please visit www.nufarm.com/uscrop to download a full label.

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