Fall Grass Weed Control Strategies

School has reopened and it will soon be time again for Friday Night Lights! It is also time to begin to field questions about the control of some of the menacing weeds that infest our fields and pastures. Pastures that are reduced because of this summer’s dry weather and the reduction of grass sward height helps weeds to get an even greater toehold due to the lack of competition for light and soil nutrients.

Ragweed continues to be the bane of many fall pastures and like many of our fall weeds, it probably is too late to get good control with a chemical at this point. Generally speaking, if you seed blooms or seeds, it is time to put the sprayer away for a bit. What I suggest that you should do is note where ragweed or other weeds are an issue and prepare to go to war with these pests next year. The good news is that some of ragweed’s friends can be controlled with the same products at the same time.

Yellow, giant and green foxtail are all common in Virginia. They are all clump forming summer annuals that spread only by seed. Seeds germinate from late May through mid-summer, and like ragweed, seem to take over pastures and fields in August and September when they bloom and set seed. They proliferate in pastures mostly because livestock do not find them particularly tasty, so they don’t get controlled by animals ingesting them.

The only current control measure is an application of quinclorac (Facet-L) after a first cutting of hay has been removed or a pasture is grazed down in early June. Quinclorac has both preemergent and postemergent activity on foxtail; however, postemergent activity is only effective on foxtail seedlings up to 2 inches tall. An application in June works well to catch emerged foxtails when they are small or to control seeds that have not yet germinated. Because quinclorac’s effectiveness depends heavily on preemergence control, it is important to apply the product in situations that allow the spray to reach the ground (i.e. thick hay or pasture is removed). Facet-L is labeled for hay and pasture in a variety of different grass species and although timothy is not one of the grasses labeled, VA Tech tests on the product in the Shenandoah Valley demonstrated that timothy is not adversely affected by Facet L.

Quinclorac also controls crabgrass, barnyard grass, and ragweed, but it should not be mixed with liquid fertilizer. Facet L is rainfast after 6 hours and the current recommended rate is 1 quart of Facet L per acre combined with 2 pints of crop oil concentrate. Quinclorac can be tank mixed with up to 2 pints of 2,4-D to help you battle broad leaf weeds as well.

One threat that you can make plans to attack in 2025 is thistle. Again, control right now is an exercise in futility. Mowing or bush hogging can make you feel better but they also (particularly bush hogging) really just ensures that you have a really nice distribution of seeds across your fields and pastures. Thistle are easily controlled by applying low levels of 2, 4 D or other broadleaf herbicides as early as October or November when thistles are in the rosette stage of their life cycle. In fact you can apply herbicides to thistle even in February, but it is important that the air temperature be in the 50s or 60s when spraying. Caution should also be taken to plan you spray mixture amounts very precisely because you do not want to damage your sprayer or pumps with frozen mixtures in the cold weather that is sure to come. Clean the tank out completely and drain and service the pump to prevent ruptures that wll only be discovered when you are prepared to spray next spring.

Upcoming Events

Aug 16 Deadline to consign calves to September VQA Sale

Aug 20 August VQA Sale, Tri State Livestock Market 7 pm

Aug 26 VQA Steer Take Up

Aug 28 VQA Heifer Take Up

Aug 29 Hay and Forage Field Day, SWVA AREC

Sept 24 September VQA Sale

Sept 26 Smyth Washington Cattleman Meeting

Sept 30 VQA Steer Take Up

Oct 2 VQA Heifer take Up

Oct 9 Ag Field Day for 4th Graders

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Andy Overbay or Pam Testerman at (276) 783-5175/TDD (800) 828-1120) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.