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### **Headline: Pasture Weed Control**

**WARSAW, Mo.** – Pasture weed control seems to be an ongoing issue. Weather conditions, grazing management, and soil fertility all play a role in the amount of weed pressure in a given pasture.

The best pasture weed control measure is to have a thick stand of grasses and legumes. This reduces the opportunity for weeds to germinate and grow in a pasture. This is done through effective fertilization and grazing management. However, even under the best management conditions, weeds can become an issue.

Identifying the specific weed problem is the first step to weed control. It is important to know the growth cycle of a particular weed in order to determine the appropriate time to attempt to control it. MU has a publication entitled “Weed and Brush Control for Forages, Pastures and Noncropland” which contains pictures, life cycle information, and control measures for many common weeds found in pastures and hayfields.

Many producers are reluctant to spray because broadleaf weed herbicides will eliminate legumes from pastures and hay fields. In some cases, this may actually be a benefit in the long run. Dr. Kevin Bradley, MU Extension Weed Science Specialist, conducted research on spraying pastures for broadleaf weeds and studied how that impacted subsequent grazing behavior by beef cattle.

Cattle in Dr. Bradley’s study were fitted with GPS collars and this was used to track grazing behavior in sprayed vs. non-sprayed areas of a pasture. Cattle distribution prior to spraying and for one month after spraying showed equal distribution of cattle across both sprayed and non-sprayed parts of the pasture.

Two months after spraying, however, 77 percent of the cattle distribution was on the sprayed portion of the pasture. Three months after spraying, this increased to 84 percent. Other locations around the state did not show as dramatic of response, but all sprayed areas had greater distribution of cattle in herbicide treated compared to untreated portions of the pastures.

Dr. Bradley summarized that the degree of distribution increase was correlated to initial and final weed density. Greater weed pressure resulted in greater distribution increase for treated areas in the pastures. Only one location, however, showed greater forage yield for treated vs. untreated pasture three months after spraying.

More details on this study can be found at the following website: [www.weedscience.missouri.edu](http://www.weedscience.missouri.edu). Select “Slideshows” from the menu and scroll to “Pastures/Forages” to locate the summary results of this study.

Copies of the weed and brush control guide can be ordered on-line at [www.extension.missouri.edu](http://www.extension.missouri.edu). Search for “pasture weed and brush control guide”. The guide can also be ordered at your local MU Extension Center.

Weed control in pastures and hayfields is a difficult issue to deal with. Producers are reluctant to spray due to the temporary loss of legumes. An alternative might be to focus on the areas with the most weed pressure. Combinations of herbicide treatment, soil fertility management, and grazing management may be enough to help get a severe weed problem under control.

For additional information, contact me at the Benton County Extension Center at (660) 438-5012, by e-mail at [schmitze@missouri.edu](mailto:schmitze@missouri.edu) or contact your local MU Extension Center.

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