

## Fall Herbicide

*by Andy Luke, MU Extension Agronomy Specialist*

Winter annual weeds cause problems for row-crop farmers across Missouri every spring. There's still time to make herbicide applications this fall to control weeds before they cause you problems next planting season.

A winter annual weed is a weed that generally germinates in the fall, goes dormant over the winter, then resumes growth and completes its life cycle in the spring. Common winter annual weeds are marestail, henbit, chickweed and field pennycress. With adequate moisture, we have seen many weeds emerge this fall and can expect more to germinate as temperatures allow. No-till fields without cover crops planted are the most likely to have winter annual weed pressure, so therefore are the fields that herbicide applications should be focused on.

A number of producers have asked whether or not they should use a residual herbicide in their application. This largely depends on the timing of the application and next crop to be grown. How long a residual herbicide persists in the soil is dependent on weather conditions. Cold weather will slow the degradation of the herbicide, which will provide a greater period of control but may lead to injury if the following crop is susceptible. A mild winter will allow for quicker degradation, which will likely mean a burndown application is needed before planting. Earlier applications will see the largest benefit of a residual, so at this point it may not be worth it to use a residual in your application. While a residual herbicide will continue to control winter annuals as they emerge in the next couple of months, it can't be expected to provide control of summer annual weeds next growing season.

Herbicides can be applied as long as day-time temperatures remain in the 40s. Check to make sure that at least half of the leaf area remains green and healthy, and that it has not been damaged by frost. Try to time herbicide applications for the afternoons, when the sun is out. This is when the plant will be actively growing and will provide greater absorption of the herbicide into the leaf. For troublesome weeds such as marestail, applying herbicides in the fall when the plant is still in the rosette stage will lead to much greater control than waiting until next spring.

For more information, contact Andy Luke, MU Extension agronomy specialist, at the Harrison County Extension Office (660) 425-6434 or email me at [lukea@missouri.edu](mailto:lukea@missouri.edu).

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