

What's the Yellow Flower in Pastures?



I have received several calls the past couple of weeks about the yellow flower taking over pastures. The plant in question is called buttercup. Buttercup (*Ranunculus sp.*) is a short lived perennial. Buttercup emerges from seed and/or corm during the fall and winter months and it then bolts in early spring producing a shiny, yellow, five petal flower. Buttercup flourishes in pastures with poor stands of desirable forage. Livestock will avoid this plant since it is poisonous. Buttercup is more common in continuously grazed pastures.

Allowing livestock to overgraze pastures along with low fertility are the main factors that contribute to the spread of this weed. Therefore, long-term pasture management practices that promote growth of healthy pastures improve competition against this weed. Soil sampling to improve fertility, renovating and reseeding pastures at the proper timing to maximize establishment and growth, proper stocking rates, and rotational grazing are ways to improve pasture competition.

Short-term management of buttercup includes a herbicide program. Herbicides registered for use on grass pastures that contain 2,4-D, dicamba, aminopyralid and/or metsulfuron will provide good to excellent control of buttercup. Optimum control with herbicides will be achieved in early spring in the rosette stage prior to bolting of the buttercup flower stalk. Consider using a surfactant, also. Once buttercup begins to flower, control from herbicides will be reduced. Herbicides labeled to control buttercup can also severely injure or kill legumes such as clover. Therefore, a decision of which is needed more in the pasture weed control or clover must be made. *Read and follow all label directions and restrictions.* Short-term weed management of buttercup will need to be implemented each spring until soil seed bank numbers have been reduced to a manageable level. Currently, rotational grazed pastures can be mowed where buttercup is flowering to help reduce more seed being introduced to the field.



For more information on pasture management of this weed or other pasture weed management, contact me at the University of Missouri Extension Center and inquire about IPM guide 1031: "Weed and Brush Control for Forages, Pastures, and Non-Cropland" at 573-243-3581.