

Broomsedge Bluestem Management (*Andropogon virginicus* L.)

Broomsedge (a.k.a broomsage, bromesedge, yellow bluestem) is a warm season perennial grass found throughout Missouri. Like other warm season grasses, it is dormant during the fall through early spring, as pictured below. Broomsedge growth begins as temperatures consistently stay above 60 degrees F. It produces many seeds that are distributed by wind. It is a poor competitor, has poor forage quality and low palatability. Broomsedge can quickly become the dominant species in over-grazed, low pH (<5.5), low phosphorus, thin (eroded) soils where desired vegetation will not thrive.

Since broomsedge is a perennial that is usually well established when many consider managing, the elimination within a single season is generally not practical. Since this plant thrives on low pH and low fertility soils, soil testing is the first step in managing a broomsedge infested field. Improved soil pH and fertility will shift the competitive edge toward the desirable forages. This component will take various lengths of time depending on soil test levels. If your budget is limited, the priority should be adjusting pH with lime.

There is a very short window when vegetative growth just begins, prior to early boot that cattle may graze broomsedge, but even then it is not choice forage and generally avoided in a continuous grazing system. Broomsedge is also a poor competitor with other forage species. Managed rotational grazing will help shift the pasture back to desirable forages, if those forages are currently present by reducing over grazing and increasing the potential of grazing of the broomsedge during more palatable stages of growth.

If broomsedge is shading desirable species lower in the canopy, mowing may be necessary to bring in more light. However, neither mowing nor prescribed burning will reduce broomsedge populations. The application of glyphosate during active growth, either as a spot spray or rope wick, can be an effective herbicide option. A broadcast application of glyphosate in a spray-smother-spray program when establishing a new pasture will also help reduce broomsedge populations.

Publications:

Broomsedge bluestem USDA -

http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_anvi2.pdf

Native Warm Season Grasses University of Tennessee -

<http://utbfc.utk.edu/Content%20Folders/Forages/Forage%20Species/Publications/PB1752.pdf>

