

WEED CONTROL OPTIONS FOR PASTURES

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What is a weed? A pasture or hayfield “weed” is any plant that you deem as being out of place and/or a plant that is decreasing your desired forage production. Weeds may be classified in several ways including broadleaf weeds, woody plants, and undesirable grasses. Besides decreasing forage, weeds can also interfere with forage utilization, grazing distribution, etc. There are several methods available to control weeds and increase production of and access to desirable forages. The three main methods are cultural, mechanical, and chemical. The cultural method is quite simple—a thriving grass stand is an excellent form of weed control or suppression. The mechanical method is probably the most common method used and involves periodic mowing or clipping to deter weed growth. The chemical method involves the use of a herbicide and is becoming more popular in Kentucky due to the introduction of several new herbicides.

The following six tips outline the simple steps that can be used if a herbicide will be used for weed control:

- 1. Identify the weed problem.** Recommended herbicides and application rates vary according to weed species and the timing of application. Apply the right herbicide at the appropriate rate to control the problem weeds present.
- 2. Use a calibrated sprayer.** Calibration prevents both waste and expense of over-application, and reduced control from under-application. It's the only way to get both the result you want and your money's worth.
- 3. Spray at the right time with the right rate.** Annual weeds in pastures are generally most susceptible early in the season when they're small and growing actively, and when soil moisture is adequate. That's when the lowest recommended rates will be effective. As weeds grow larger, you may need to increase the application rate or switch to a more effective herbicide. Perennial weeds may require spraying at a specific time. Consult your dealer and the Extension service for local recommendations.

4. **Recognize that drought-stressed or mature weeds will be more difficult to control.** Effectiveness will be reduced if weeds don't have adequate moisture and aren't growing, or if they are already mature. Don't spray unless the timing is right to get control of the weeds.
5. **Follow label directions for application and mixing.** Use a sufficient volume of water carrier to provide good coverage of the foliage, usually 10 to 20 gallons of total spray mixture per acre for ground broadcast applications. To provide more complete wetting of the foliage, use an agricultural surfactant. Consider a drift-control additive to reduce drift and improve deposition.
6. **Be familiar with any restrictions or precautions.** Observe any application or grazing restrictions. Remember, too, that grasses treated with some herbicides may for a time carry a herbicide residue that can be transferred to the soil via hay or livestock manure and urine. Don't use hay from treated pastures or manure from animals grazing treated pastures for landscaping or gardening. Be sure to read and observe all label precautions.

It's always a good idea to check with your herbicide dealer or county Extension agent for new recommendations. Your options may change.