

January 23, 2014

AGRIVIEW

By: Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent

For at least thirty years, the Annual East Texas Turfgrass Conference has been held and has provided great information to both professional lawn care managers and homeowners alike. The 2014 conference will be no different. The event will once again be held at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center in overton on Thursday, Feb. 6th.

The East Texas Turfgrass Conference is open to all school districts, city park & recreation departments, lawn & landscape professionals and homeowners alike. Registration will start at 8:00 am. and the program will kick-off at 8:30 a.m. there is a \$30 registration fee that is payable at the door the morning of the conference, no RSVP needed and will feature an all-you-can-eat catfish meal at the Noon hour. 4 continuing education units will be provided towards the re-certification of private, commercial and non-commercial applicators license.

Topics for this years conference will include: Turf & Weed ID, Pesticide Updates,\ Efficient Irrigation for Healthy Plants, Basic Turfgrass Species Management and Pesticide Laws & Regulation updates. The conference will also feature two live demonstration that will cover pesticide drift and a demonstration on how to calibrate a sprayer.

There will also be several vendors that will have informational booths set up to visit during the break sessions, as well as before and after the program. For more detailed information, as well as a printed copy of the program schedule, location and other information go to <http://henderson.agrilife.org/files/2012/06/turf-12-18-13.pdf>.

GRASSBUR:

Grassbur (field sandbur, sandbur, etc.) is a troublesome, nasty grass weed species that affects desirable grass forage quantity and quality. Although young plants are often utilized as a grazing forage, when in the advanced stages of seed production this plant produces seed capsules that can penetrate tissues of animals causing pain and sometimes infection. More importantly, it has a very negative effect on hay quality and substantially reduces forage value. There are many different grassbur species in Texas although one of the more common is *Cenchrus spinifex* (formerly *Cenchrus incertus*). Regardless, most are easily recognized in the mature stage of growth when the pernicious seed heads become apparent. What you may interpret as the seed is actually a seed “capsule” that usually contains from 1 to 3 seeds. This capsule provides a nice environment for the seed, soaking up soil moisture and holding it until the seed has been provided the other stimulants (warm temperatures, light, day length, etc.) necessary for germination.

This is also what makes it more survivable than some other grass species in sandy soils that are more prone to dry out. We often think of the grassbur species as being warm season annual plants. However, many of these are classified as perennials which can survive from one year to the next. Although foliage may get “burned” off by freezing temperatures in the fall or winter, sometimes these plants may survive and come back from

the roots the following spring. These plants might be more difficult to eradicate, since they have already developed a substantial root system the previous year. Whenever you have a weak stand of annual or perennial grass forage, grass bur will take advantage of this situation and flourish. Therefore, one of the best cultural control measures is to keep your forage grass stands healthy with proper management.

The most important consideration for control is recognition of grassbur in the early stages of growth. The leaves on young seedling plants are usually hairless, while the sheaths surrounding the stem may have hairs along the margins.

The sheaths will generally become pubescent (with hairs) as the plant matures. A membranous ligule is present with hairs on the fringe. The stems are somewhat flattened and often purplish colored at the base. Tillers are expressed on the plants early which add to the competitiveness of this weed. When you are doubtful about identification, you can try to dig up seedling plants and you will often find the bur attached to the seedling.

It is a good idea to keep hay fields scouted in the fall for grassbur presence so you are able to identify those areas where you might apply a preemergence, preventative herbicide in late winter or early spring.

In the spring and throughout the summer, you should again scout the fields for early detection of grassbur and get postemergence treatments applied in a timely manner. No matter what the case, if you have had grassbur in the past, it is likely you will have it for years to come. Again, proper forage management will be the first step in grassbur control.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- February 1st - Hunter Education Course - Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center
- 7:30 a.m. - 903-676-2277**
- February 6th - East Texas Turfgrass Conference - Texas A&M AgriLife
Research & Extension Center, Overton - 8:00 a.m. - \$30.00**
- February 25th & 26th - East Texas Beef Cattle Short Course - Corazon-Pitchford Sale
Facility, Athens - 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

*Rick Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent - Agriculture for Texas A&M
AgriLife Extension Service. Visit our web page at <http://henderson.agrilife.org/>.*