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**Ag. News**

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**Early Weed Control**

Early weed control in pastures may be one big key to pasture recovery and acceptable forage production this spring. We have had an extremely wet fall and winter rains for soil moisture to carry us to spring green up. Thousands of acres of Wise County range and pasture support excessive cover of weeds and brush due to over grazing that use valuable water and reduce grass production. The result of overgrazing will result in increased soil erosion. These noxious plants must be managed effectively for pastures to reach their production potential. Use of herbicides provides an effective and efficient alternative for controlling weeds to improve pastures and maintain them in a highly productive condition.

Some herbicides provide a high degree of control of certain species; however, seldom is a species eradicated. Consider other potential rangeland uses when developing a brush management program. Many trees, shrubs and forbs are valuable as food and cover for wildlife and may be an important component in livestock diets. Therefore, a brush management program should provide for use of control methods that give optimum benefits to livestock and wildlife.

Herbicide application may increase palatability of poisonous plants. Thus, they are more likely to be consumed by livestock. To prevent losses to toxic plants, herbicide-treated areas with poisonous plants present should not be grazed until the toxic plants dry up and lose their palatability.

Properly used herbicides are effective and safe. Misuse can result in poor brush and weed control and possible hazards associated with herbicidal drift, dangerous residues, or killing desirable plants. Listed below are points to follow for proper herbicide use:

- Identify the weed or brush species and evaluate the need for control.
- Consider expected benefits, costs and alternative control practices.
- Select and purchase the suggested herbicide for the weed or brush species.
- Read and follow herbicide label directions for allowable uses, application rates and special handling or mixing requirements.

- Provide and require the use of proper safety equipment.
- Calibrate spray equipment.
- Mix herbicides in a ventilated area, preferably outside.
- Spray under conditions that prevent drift to susceptible crops.
- Apply the herbicides at the suggested rate and time.
- Keep a record of the herbicide used, the time required to spray, weather conditions, rate of herbicide in carrier, date, location and the person using the herbicide.

The sprayer used must apply the correct quantity of herbicide mixture to a specific area. To calibrate spray equipment, see Extension publication L-5465 (available at the Extension office), "Weed Busters: Sprayer Calibration Guide."

Suggested herbicides must be registered and labeled for use by the Environmental Protection Agency. *Because the status of herbicide label clearance is subject to change, be certain that the herbicide is currently labeled for the intended use.*

The user is always responsible for the effects of herbicide residue on his livestock and crops, as well as for problems that could arise from drift or movement of the herbicide from his property to that of others. *Always read and follow carefully the instructions on the container label.*

For more information on early weed control, contact the Wise County Texas AgriLife Extension office at 940-627-3341.