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### ***Broomsedge Bluestem – Considerations for Control***

This statement from a USDA Plant Fact Sheet on broomsedge bluestem tells us most all we need to know about why broomsedge has fared so well in our cool season grass stands: *On infertile soils, broomsedge is a long-lived competitor.* It also means control will be a challenge.

Mowing hasn't been shown to be effective. Late summer/fall burning might reduce broomsedge, but can also cause cool season weed increases. Work from the University of Missouri found that burns at this time may damage fescue stands, limiting their usefulness.

There isn't a 'magic bullet' herbicide, either. Broomsedge is susceptible to glyphosate, but since glyphosate is non-selective, you'll also damage other grasses/broadleaves as well. Use of a wiper or rollers has been inconsistent due to coverage issues.

Broomsedge work done at the University of Missouri in 2008 looked at increasing cool season grass (fescue in this study) competitiveness using fertility as a broomsedge suppressor. The addition of fifty pounds of phosphorous per acre plus lime increased fescue stand composition from less than 15 percent to over 35 percent, while *slightly* reducing the broomsedge stand. Bottom line: we can help our cool season grasses become more competitive with hopes of retaining the stand, but broomsedge doesn't go away quickly. This work suggests an appropriate fertility program will be needed for two or more years to see much difference.

As daunting a task as it may seem, start sooner than later if broomsedge is invading your forage stands. Consider a soil test now with implementation of a longer term nutrient management program based on those results. Anything else you can do to help the cool season grasses stay competitive can help as well, including appropriate haying cutting height and harvest timing/grazing management. Be patient. Broomsedge didn't get a foothold overnight – and it likely won't go away overnight, either.

### ***Poison Ivy – Or Something Else??***

About this time of year, it gets harder and harder to stay inside, particularly as we get warm winter days. If you're getting the itch to clean up some unwanted woody species around the home, don't *give* yourself an itch by unknowingly cutting in to poison ivy.

During the growing season, poison ivy's three leaves (versus the five leaflets common with Virginia Creeper, for example) are fairly easy to discern and avoid. In the winter, the absence of leaves makes it much more difficult. Look instead at the plant's roots. The aerial roots on poison ivy vines are hair like. Virginia Creeper root hairs are more plump, almost the size of a pencil lead. Before you start cutting, it's good to know what you are cutting in to.

If you thought winter would eliminate the need to know if you were cutting in to poison ivy, think again. The oil present in poison ivy that causes problems is urushiol. Present in all plant parts, it is especially potent in the sap, with the ability to cause a rash even one to five years after the plant has died. The sap will go down to a degree in winter, but still rises and falls a bit, meaning levels can still cause issues if you cut in to it. After all, the amount of urushiol that covers the head of a pin can cause a rash in 500 people. Brush cutter beware, indeed.