

October 30, 2020

Jody G. Holthaus
District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

Jody will not have an article this week.

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Fall Musk Thistle Control Efforts

There aren't many weeds forage managers can control this time of year, but musk thistle is one. In fact, fall musk thistle control efforts will likely have more efficacy than spring ones.

The reason has everything to do with growth cycle. Musk thistles are biennial or winter annual species. Biennials take two growing seasons to complete their life cycle - thistles germinate in spring and spend the entire summer as a rosette, live through the winter, and bolt the next year in May/June. Winter annuals germinate with moisture and warm temperatures in the fall, live through the winter and bolt the following year.

This means the rosette growth stage in fall is an excellent time to implement a herbicide control program. Fall also gives us a measure of safety when applying herbicides since field crops are harvested, and trees have lost their leaves. Control now, particularly in areas where sensitive vegetation is an issue, can be much safer than in spring.

The fall herbicide application window is open until the ground is frozen, and musk thistle plants have shut down activity until spring. Freezing *temperatures* will start to damage musk thistle plants (yellowing/curling leaves), but plants are susceptible to herbicides as long as green tissue exists. For best results, apply control products on a warm, sunny day.

Numerous products are available. Products containing 2,4-D can be effective (LVE formulations tend to be better over amine formulations during this control window). Residual products containing picloram (Tordon 22K) and aminopyralid (Milestone, Chaparral, etc...) might be options to consider as well.

For information on product trials, check out a recent KSU Agronomy eUpdate at https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/article_new/musk-thistle-control-in-the-fall-411-3 or the KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide available from any of our District Offices. Your county noxious weed director is a great resource as well – for herbicide product purchases *and* recommendations. As with any pesticide product, *always* read and follow label directions.

Turf Fertilization Window #2 – Now Open!

If you're doing split applications of nitrogen to turf grass, a first application in September should now be followed up with a November application. Despite the slowed top growth as a result of cooler temperatures, plants are still producing carbohydrates. This energy is used first for top growth, with excess stored in the crown/roots to be used for early season growth next season. This allows us to skip early spring nitrogen applications that promote excessive shoot growth at the expense of needed root growth. Hold off on spring applications until May. Along the way, we help improve winter hardiness, root growth, and shoot density.

Application rates should be limited to one to one and a half pounds of actual nitrogen per thousand square foot of lawn area. Urea or ammonium sulfate containing products are good options (avoid slow release formulations). If you want to balance phosphorous and potassium needs of the turf, now is a great time for a soil test to do so as well.

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

The Power of Sleep

We all have trouble sleeping from time to time, but it can become a real problem when insomnia persists day after day. Beyond making one tired and moody, a lack of sleep can have serious effects on our health, increasing our propensity for obesity, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes.

So what causes sleep issues?

*Poor sleep habits. An irregular bedtime, frequent naps, late-night activities, or week-end sleeping-in can scramble your body's normal sleep/wake schedules.

*Emotional stress. Emotional stress accounts for more than 50% of chronic sleep problems.

*Physical Illness.

*Diet and exercise habits. Alcohol or caffeine near bedtime can have adverse effects on one's sleeping patterns. A large meal or strenuous exercise close to bedtime can temporarily boost the body's metabolism, chasing away sleep.

Before turning to other options, try some of these tips to help you get a better night's sleep.

1. Exercise. "Exercise boosts the effect of natural sleep hormones such as melatonin," says Dr. Karen Carlson, associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. Carlson suggests a morning workout is ideal. Exposing yourself to bright daylight first thing in the morning will help the natural circadian rhythm.
2. Ambience matters. Noise, light, excessive heat or cold, drafts, the air that's too humid or too dry, all can prevent sleep.
3. Start a sleep ritual. Just like routine was so important to your child's evening sleep habits, the same goes for adults. "Rituals help signal the body and mind that it's going to be time for sleep." Explains Dr. Carlson. Drink a glass of warm milk, take a bath, listen to calming music, or read a book for pleasure to unwind before. Avoid television or your phone.
4. De-stress. Worries can manifest when you are finally trying to rest. This stress is a stimulus that fights your efforts to sleep. Before winding down, deal with these worries first. Try writing out your concerns and what actions can be taken. Plan a little bit for the next day. Then start relaxing, try some deep breathing exercises.
5. Try taking a break. Rather than trying harder and harder to fall asleep during a poor Night, turn on the light, and try doing something else for a while. This can decrease frustration and tension about being unable to sleep.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Laughter is Good Medicine

Humor is a priceless medicine that is fun, free, and easy to use. When people share laughter, it binds them together and increases happiness. Laughter also triggers healthy physical changes in your body that strengthen your immune system. It is a powerful antidote to stress, pain, and conflict.

Laughter is good for your health because it relaxes your whole body. The benefits of a good, hearty laugh can linger for up to 45 minutes.

Humor can help you shift your perspective, allowing you to see situations in a more realistic and less threatening light. It even provides pain relief, as laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural "feel good" chemicals.

Your heart benefits from a good laugh: Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, adding protection against heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Nothing works faster than a good laugh to bring mind and body back into balance. Humor inspires teamwork, enhances relationships, keeps you grounded, and connects you to others.

Shared laughter is even more powerful than laughing alone. You can learn to laugh at any stage in life — all it takes is a willingness to risk some loss of control. If you are timid, start with a few giggles. More courageous? Go for a good belly laugh — even snorting. Whatever your style, enjoy a good laugh because it is good for your health!