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Fall Musk Thistle Control

A 2020 Kansas Department of Agriculture summary of acreages infested by musk thistle showed the noxious weed to be well established and present in every corner of the state. Even as infestation levels across the three Meadowlark Extension District weren't as high as some, it's still a weed that deserves some attention – and fall is one time to give it.

Chemical control methods are far and away the most popular methods of musk thistle control, but there are mechanical and even biological approaches as well. An integrated approach is typically the most effective, but for purposes of space and time, chemical will be my focus.

Because musk thistle is a biennial or winter annual species, there is a rosette stage of the plant prior to it bolting during the next growing season. Fall is when we can capitalize from a chemical control standpoint and implement control practices while plants are still small – and drift potential is reduced.

Chemical control opportunities will likely extend until the ground is frozen and musk thistle plants have shut down activity until warmer temperatures in the spring. As long as green tissue exists, plants are susceptible to herbicides, but freezing temperatures will start to damage plants, resulting in yellowing and curling of leaves. Dry conditions can reduce efficacy a well.

Products containing 2,4-D (LVE formulations were found to be more effective than amine formulations in Kansas research), dicamba (in combination with 2,4-D) and picloram have all shown very good effectiveness. Other potential active ingredients to consider would be aminopyralid (Milestone) and aminopyralid + metsulfuron (Chaparral). Products containing picloram or aminopyralid will have carryover to control emerging seedlings the following spring. Fall thistle control efforts should be performed on warm, sunny days for best results.

For musk thistle control options, request a 2021 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide from District office or online at: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/SRP1162.pdf>.

Broadleaf Weed Control in Lawns

Dandelions have already produced a flush of plants this fall and henbit and chickweed are likely on the way as well. If you want to get on top of them before next spring – start now. These young plants are still small and are moving materials from the top portion of the plant to the roots, making them more easily controlled now than what we'll face next year.

Herbicides containing 2,4-D or combination products that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba are all good options. Choose a day that is 50 degrees or higher when the weeds are actively growing, allowing better translocation of product from the leaves to roots. Cooler temperatures will slow, but not stop the process.

Newer chemistries containing the three aforementioned active ingredients plus carfentrazone will tend to give a quicker response than the other products mentioned especially as temperatures move below 50 degrees.

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Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

No article this week.