

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

Planning Your Brush Control Program

Let's assume that you have just five trees per acre in your pasture. Let's also assume that those five trees are approximately three feet in diameter. No big deal, right? A three foot diameter tree would 'technically' cover approximately seven square feet of grass, but for easy math purposes, let's just assume it only takes up five acres (the cow can graze under a little of it, right?!). Five trees times five square feet is equal to 25 square feet per acre. On an 80 acre pasture, that's 2000 square feet or about four and a half percent. Four and a half percent on a pasture that yields two tons per acre is a scant 90 pounds. No big deal, right?! That's only \$2.70 in hay (at \$60/ton), so it's really irrelevant! Maybe so, until that tree becomes 15 that are eight foot in diameter. That all of a sudden becomes tree coverage on over one and half percent of the acreage and requires over \$20 in hay to replace on an 80 acre pasture. Still, no problem, right?

Maybe your feed budget can absorb a small number of trees, and maybe it can even absorb a large number of trees, but the fact remains that trees and brush on range land result in lost productivity. The obvious is what comes from the calculations above. The not so obvious can come from changes in grazing distribution, reduced access to certain areas of the pasture, and reduced stocking rates. All will ultimately affect the bottom line of your grazing budget.

Control programs will affect your budget as well, but when compared to the alternative of lost production, greater potential for overgrazing, and continued spread of problem species, they may not be as bad as you think! Programs can easily be tailored to your specific species, equipment, and expertise, with options from the commonly used foliar and cut stump applications to soil and basal bark applications.

For a list of control programs, check out a copy of our KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide. They are available online at <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/SRP1126.pdf> or from your District Extension Office. Five full pages of information will provide you with a number of options to help you enhance your brush control program. Stop and get one today!

Can I Mow Low?

Spring is here. Winter annual flowers (dandelions, mainly!) are in bloom, and it's time to mow! As much as some folks enjoy mowing, most of us still want to 'stay ahead' of the rapid growth that occurs early in the season, and could be tempted to do so by mowing low.

Surprisingly, mowing low early in the spring may work out okay. It can actually speed green-up by removing old, dead grass and allowing the soil to warm up more quickly. Just be sure that you return to normal mowing height after the first or second cutting to discourage crabgrass (crabgrass seed must have light to germinate and higher mowing will help shade soil) and encourage deep rooting (for fescue and bluegrass, the higher the height of cut, the deeper the root system and that equals a more drought-resistant turf).

For the first mowing, you can probably mow fescue and bluegrass down to a height of one to one and a half inches (don't scalp!). After that, raise the mowing height for Kentucky bluegrass to a height of two to three inches and fescue to three to three and a half inches.