

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

Fall Musk Thistle Control

Have you had a chance to take a look at your pastures lately? If so, have you seen any musk thistle rosettes? Control efforts applied during the rosette stage far exceed those implemented on blooming plants. Combine that with the fact that the opportunity for offsite drift is lower now than in the spring, and all of a sudden this control window might be a pretty good one to pursue! Freezing temperatures will start to damage musk thistle plants, with some yellowing and curling of leaves. However, the plants are susceptible to herbicides as long as green tissue exists.

KSU Range Management Specialist Dr. Walt Fick instituted a musk thistle control plot in December of 2012 to evaluate various control products against musk thistle as well as their residual control. Treatments were made on a day with temperatures at fifty degrees or slightly above. All products - Milestone, Tordon 22K, 2,4-D, and Chaparral - provided excellent control.

There was also some residual control benefits to many of the products, with all of the above except for 2,4-D providing better than 90% control of spring germinating rosettes the following year. The active ingredient in Milestone is aminopyralid. Tordon 22K contains 2 lbs/gallon picloram. Chaparral contains aminopyralid and metsulfuron. These products are all labelled for use on range and pasture. Always read and follow label directions. Select a warm sunny day if possible when spraying musk thistle in the fall. Full musk thistle control recommendations can be found in our KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide available at your District Office.

Apply Late-Season Nitrogen Application in November

Did you know that cool season turfgrasses are still making carbohydrates (food) for photosynthesis? That means that now is the time to provide cool-season lawns with one final nitrogen application to wrap up the season. This application helps increase the rate of photosynthesis rate. Since plant top growth has slowed, carbohydrates are stored in the crown and other storage tissues in the plant where they can help the turfgrass green up earlier in the spring and sustain growth into May without the need for early-spring (March or April) nitrogen (early-spring nitrogen applications are less desirable because they can lead to excessive shoot growth and reduced root growth). November-applied nitrogen also helps improve winter hardiness, root growth and shoot density.

Apply at a rate of One to 1 to one and a half pounds actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. of lawn area. Following the recommended spreader setting on the fertilizer bag should apply the correct amount of fertilizer. Fertilizer needs to be readily available to the plant, because the growing season is nearly over so use quickly-available nitrogen carrier such as urea or ammonium sulfate. Avoid products that contain water-insoluble nitrogen (slow-release) for this application. As always, sweep up any fertilizer that gets on driveways, sidewalks, or streets and reapply it to the lawn.