

David Hallauer, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Crop and Soils, Horticulture

Sericea Lespedeza Control Programs

Pasture productivity can be compromised by numerous factors. Fertility programs on cool season pastures have a huge impact. Grazing management (height, duration, etc.) is large as well. And no one would dispute the effect that weeds and brush have on productivity!

One of the more common difficult to control weed species for us here in northeast Kansas has been sericea lespedeza. A noxious weed in the state for almost 17 years, sericea lespedeza continues to provide challenges for grassland managers.

When we discuss noxious weed control, chemical options tend to be the most common remedies. Even so, grazing management, particularly with sheep and goats, can help suppress sericea lespedeza stands while producing a saleable product. Research in cattle supplemented with corn steep liquor has been show to increase sericea lespedeza consumption as well, so livestock can be a big help in your control program.

Other management options could include mowing or burning, but should be used with caution so forage stands are not reduced. Research with a single mowing in mid- to late-July will eventually reduce stands of sericea lespedeza to some extent, but probably won't eliminate it, even after several years of mowing. A late-summer mowing will eliminate most seed production. Be careful with mowing to avoid compromising the forage stand while controlling the sericea lespedeza! Mowing effects can be enhanced by allowing four to six weeks of regrowth following mowing and then following up with an appropriate herbicide.

Prescribed burning actually stimulates seed production! While that may not seem like a good thing, planning for a follow-up application of herbicides in the year of burning can actually help with control. Research on burning in August and early September shows that it nearly eliminates seed production. Again, use with extreme caution to avoid undesirable effects on forage species.

Herbicide programs can do a great job using the right product at the right time. Research has consistently shown that early summer herbicide applications when plants are in the vegetative growth stage can be very effective. Remedy Ultra (triclopyr) and PastureGard HL (triclopyr + fluroxypyr) can provide effective control when applied during June and into early July. Later summer applications, even when sericea is actively blooming, have been found to be effective when using metsulfuron containing products like Escort XP, Cimarron Plus, and Chaparral. Herbicide treatments need to be repeated every two to four years. Left untreated, sericea lespedeza will take over and significantly reduce forage production and diversity.

Resources are available to assist you! The KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide available via your District Office or online at: <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/SRP1132.pdf> includes an entire page on sericea lespedeza control to go along with other sections on control of brush and weeds in pastures. Your local noxious weed department is a great resource as well. Their staff can help with chemical selection and purchases and also have mixing and sprayer calibration charts to go along with their vast expertise in designing a control program.

Don't let sericea lespedeza reduce forage productivity further. Implement a control program today!