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### ***Broomsedge Bluestem***

It might look at first glance like leftover prairie grass against the dark green backdrop of a recently fertilized hay field. You might even be lulled in to thinking that this type of diversity is a good thing. That might not be the case.

Broomsedge bluestem is a warm season perennial becoming an increasing problem in cool season grass stands. Not overly competitive, it takes advantages of an ‘opening’ in the canopy, and slowly starts its spread. Mostly unpalatable to livestock, it takes the place of more desirable species, with elimination a tough task.

The reasons for its increase are numerous. It likes low fertility. Fields with low phosphorous levels seem to be particularly susceptible to invasion. It’s not uncommon for hay fields in northeast Kansas to have low P levels, making them prime candidates for reduced cool season grass growth and an opportunity for broomsedge to thrive. Low pH levels slow cool season grass growth, helping broomsedge thrive as well. Once established, it can produce allelopathic chemicals inhibiting other plants, including the nitrogen fixing bacteria necessary for good clover establishment and survival.

To combat broomsedge bluestem, consider an integrated approach. Harvest/graze at an appropriate time and height. This will help cool season grasses remain competitive, giving them every opportunity to maintain the canopy space they occupy, and keep broomsedge out.

Fertility is a key. Start with a soil test later this summer and develop a fertility program accordingly. Research in both Missouri and Oklahoma suggests that a balanced fertility program (pH and N/P/K) can return the species composition to a predominance of desirable species in as few as two years.

These practices won’t be an overnight fix, but if you don’t start soon, broomsedge will be your forage of default – and the cost of that recovery might be a lot greater.

Want to know more about what broomsedge looks like? Check out our Meadowlark Extension District Facebook page for a recent video.

### ***Henbit Control in the Home Lawn***

The little purple flower is doing its thing. Henbit - the square stemmed winter annual that seem to completely take over many lawns every spring.

Winter annual is an important part the plant’s description. It actually started growing last fall – we just didn’t see it until it flowered. Now it’s almost a waste of time and money to try to control it. You might make it look sick. You might even burn it back. Rarely, however, will you kill it. Rather than spend money on chemicals, consider a different management plan.

First, understand that as a winter annual, henbit will die when the weather gets hot. Keep mowing and let nature take its course.

Second, mark the calendar for a fall herbicide application. Henbit germinates about mid-October. Spraying on a day that is at least 50 degrees F with 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec in late October/early November can go a long way toward eliminating these plants when small and relatively easy to control. Follow up with spot treatments in March before it puts on too much growth.

NOTE: this course of action is also very good for dandelions as well.