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Invasive Brush Species – Buckbrush

Grass managers understand well the potential for lost production from weed and brush infestations in forage stands. Left unchecked, a single plant can soon become a forest.

One of our more common brush species native to Kansas is buckbrush, often also called coralberry. Typically two to three feet tall, it is seen in many pastures and wooded areas. It's reddish/purple berry often persists through the winter and might even be visible now. A single plant soon becomes many as the plant's above-ground runners help buckbrush quickly spread, forming clumps that reduce forage production.

References differ on the value of top removal as a control method. The underground runners make it very tolerant of mowing unless performed at a time when the plant's nonstructural carbohydrates are at a low level. This occurs as the plant's leaves begin to change from light to dark green color. Whether you are mowing (early to mid-May) or burning (late spring), any control method will need to be repeated over two to three years to reduce stands.

Chemical control can also be initiated as the leaves change colors. Herbicides that contain the active ingredient 2,4-D are effective, as are other active ingredients like picloram, aminopyralid, or metsulfuron. Timing is important, and label directions must be adhered to. Picloram is a restricted use pesticide and requires a Private Pesticide Applicator's License to purchase/apply. Some of the aminopyralid/metsulfuron combination products can damage cool-season grasses and should be used with caution.

Product information (product names/rates/timing/etc...) can be found online in the 2020 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide at: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/SRP1155.pdf>. Always read the label when considering the use of herbicides.

Lawnmower Blades – Keep Them Sharp

Can you remember the last time you sharpened your lawn mower blades? Under typical mowing conditions, blades should be sharpened after every 10 hours of use. More frequent sharpening may be required when conditions are less than optimum or the presence of foreign objects in the yard could dull blades more quickly.

Dull blades don't cut cleanly. Instead, they leave the ends of the leaf blades shredded rather than cut. The shredded ends dry out and the lawn takes on a whitish cast.

It may not seem like a big deal now, but a sharp blade becomes even more important when the turf starts putting up seed heads in May. These seed heads are tougher than the rest of the grass blade and more likely to shred, increasing the ragged look associated with a dull blade.

For information on sharpening mower blades, contact your local small engine store or mower dealer or check out this helpful online video from the Kansas Healthy Yards program: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/component/allvideoshare/video/how-to-sharpen-a-mower-blade?Itemid=101>.