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### **Invasive Bluestems: Broomsedge**

When we hear 'bluestem', it often conjures up images of waving prairie grasses. Unfortunately, there are other bluestem species much less desirable. One of those is our all too common Broomsedge Bluestem. If you've confirmed its identity in your grass stand, it's all too familiar to you. If you haven't, it's a good time to look across the stand for an orange or straw-colored grass that often sticks above our cool-season grasses. It will remind you of the aforementioned desirable prairie grasses, but it's really just an invader.

There's a statement in a USDA Plant Fact Sheet on Broomsedge Bluestem stating: *On infertile soils, broomsedge is a long-lived competitor.* That pretty well defines where we see broomsedge, and we've unfortunately got a lot of acres that fit into this category. However, it isn't necessarily a species that only survives in low fertility. Rather, it likes the open space created in cool-season forage stands often the result of low fertility. It can also get a foothold when stands are thinned by armyworms or heavy grazing pressure or even drought.

If you do determine you have broomsedge (if you're uncertain, reach out and we'll try to confirm it), a soil test is a great first place to start. Results of a 2008 study at the University of Missouri evaluating the response of cool-season grass (fescue) stands containing broomsedge to fertilizer showed that the addition of fifty pounds of phosphorous per acre, plus lime, increased fescue stand composition from less than 15 percent to over 35 percent while *slightly* reducing the broomsedge composition. In addition to phosphorous and lime, I'd take a hard look at potassium as well, as levels of this important nutrient continue to decline.

As you're waiting on a soil test, take a hard look at previous weather, harvest (grazing/haying) management, and other potential contributing factors. Anything that opens up space in the stand can allow Broomsedge Bluestem to get a foothold – and not look back.

If you are in need of additional recommendations for broomsedge management, drop me a line. Getting a stand back from a broomsedge infestation isn't easy or fast, but taking the first step is necessary to make progress.