KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

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Poison Hemlock – Control Options

It's not uncommon for District Livestock and Natural Resources Agent Ross Mosteller and I to pick each other's brains about observations from field visits or questions we've received, particularly in the arena of pasture/range management. One of our discussions this week was about poison hemlock in pastures and potential livestock toxicity issues. I'll leave the toxicity details to Ross. He very nicely outlines them in a companion article on the Meadowlark Extension District Livestock and Natural Resources page: https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/livestock-natresource/ . I'll stick to a little on identification – and a bit more on control.

Poison hemlock looks kind of like a carrot plant. Leaves are triangular and made up of multiple smaller lance looking leaflets with 'lobes'. Often a rosette in year one, by year two you can get ten-foot-tall plants with erect flowering stems that are hollow, hairless, and distinctly purple spotted. Flowers/flower clusters will be an inch and a half plus in size and while appearing similar to wild carrot, the *purple*, *hairless* stems distinguish it as poison hemlock.

Control is most consistently achieved with chemicals, but timely mowing is an option and can help reduce seed production (plant elimination is unlikely), particularly as plants get too large for chemical control. If you find only a few plants, mechanical removal is an option, but it takes a lot of work *and* continued vigilance. The University of Missouri experimented with electrocution, and while not a viable option for most producers, it *was* relatively effective.

Chemical control options are numerous. A cross reference of pasture products with hemlock on the label in Kansas include 2,4-D, dicamba, picloram, triclopyr, metsulfuron, and aminopyralid - or combinations thereof. University of Missouri research helps narrow the list with work showing *multiple* active ingredient products (picloram plus 2,4-D/aminopyralid plus triclopyr) are most effective and that efforts should be focused on the rosette stage of the plant versus bolting plants or when stem elongation is occurring. University of Tennessee research suggests aminopyralid *may* have some efficacy at the early bloom stage as well. Bottom line: we have options, but early treatment is better than later, and control windows can close quickly.

If you have more questions about poison hemlock, drop Ross or I a line. We'd be happy to discuss management options further.

Prior to application of any herbicide, be sure to thoroughly read and understand the herbicide label, following all application directions and precautions. Products even containing the same active ingredients do vary greatly in allowable crop uses and use rates.