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Summertime Weed/Brush Control Challenges

The Climate Prediction Center's recent eight-to-14-day outlook says summer is here. A 40-50 percent probability of above normal temperatures even with near normal precipitation means it could get a little uncomfortable for humans - and potentially the herbicides we're using as spot treatments in range/pasture situations. While labels vary in how they address application heat or drought stress parameters, keep in mind a few things as applications continue.

Start with the size of the droplet coming out of the spray nozzle. Small droplets tend to evaporate quickly (higher humidities can help offset this a bit...) and if they do so shortly after reaching the plant - or before - ample product may not get absorbed into the target plant. It can be difficult with some equipment to make adjustments, but, when possible, adjust nozzles or reduce spray pressure to result in larger droplet sizes.

Volatility of some of our weed/brush control products can also be an issue. Volatility increases when temperatures pass 60 degrees F and are greatest above 90 degrees F. Simply put, products can become more vaporous and move long distances - even in slight breezes. Be cautious of when and where you are making applications to avoid this, with special attention paid to temperature inversions. These occur when cool air is trapped near the surface by warmer air above and can result in unintended offsite product movement, particularly in combination with smaller droplet sizes. Avoid *any* application during inversions or damaging offsite movement can occur - at a greater distance than you might think.

Even after we get product to the plant, potential control barriers still exist. If drought stress is present, plants will try to conserve water, potentially inhibiting penetration by spray solutions into the plant. Make sure product and surfactant rates are appropriate to give you the best chance of success. Even after we get product *into* the plant, temperatures into the upper 80s and 90s can slow the plant mechanisms responsible for moving the herbicide through the plant. This can result in both reduced weed control and some reduced ability of the desired forage to metabolize herbicides appropriately, resulting in discoloration or stunting. For best results and when possible, apply when plants are actively growing and recovered from stresses.

It's hard *not* to go after weeds and brush when we have the opportunity. It's also hard to spend time and money on control only to see it perform poorly. Summertime doesn't mean we have to stop trying - but it does mean we may want to adjust things slightly to optimize control.