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AG NEWS



Spurweed

Spurweed is a tiny winter annual with parsley-like leaves that grows close to the soil line. It may also be called stickers or burweed. Spurweed will germinate in the fall and winter and remains small. It normally will go unnoticed until the plant matures. White flowers will bloom in late winter. As the temperatures increase in the spring, the pollinated flowers begin to set fruit. The fruiting structures look like small rosette buttons developing in the leaf axils. In mid to late spring, the seed in the fruit structure develops spines that become sharp when the fruit dries out.



Spurweed can be prevented by maintaining a healthy turf. Healthy turf competes for water, nutrients, and space. A healthy turf can be encouraged by fertility, irrigation, and mowing height. It will function as a physical barrier, choking out many opportunistic weeds. If you have warm-season grass (like bermudagrass or zoysiagrass), it may help to use the highest cutting setting for the last cut of the season in the fall. This will ensure a thick canopy is present over winter.

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If the spurweed is already present in your lawn, it is critical to control it before the fruiting structure develops in the spring. The best time to apply herbicides for spurweed control is in the winter months of December, January, and February. The best option for homeowners to control spurweed is a post-emergence application of one of the various two and three-way mixes of 2,4-D, dicamba, and MCP. One of the most common trade names for herbicides in this category is Trimec. These products may be used on tall fescue, fall overseeded bermudagrass in which the overseeded cool-season grass has been mowed four to five times, and non-overseeded bermudagrass. The post-emergence herbicides should be applied on a sunny day when the air temperature is at least 55 degrees. Spurweed should be evaluated two to three weeks later. If the control is not acceptable, you may make additional applications. Always read the label to make sure the formulation and percentage of chemical are appropriate for your lawn.

Hay Management



Hay fed in hay rings will reduce hay waste. If you still plan to unroll hay, you may consider using a temporary electric fence to reduce waste from trampling. To do this you must first unroll a bale, then string up an electrified polywire (or some other wire used for an electric fence) down the line of hay. The wire needs to be about 30 inches above the hay. This will cause the cows to line up as they would at feed bunks, eliminating their ability to lay in or trample the hay. Feeding hay in various locations is a cost-effective way of maintaining or increasing the phosphorus, potassium, and organic matter in the soil. On

average, a 4X5 round bale will contain about 100 pounds of 17-17-17 fertilizer. The amount of fertilizer in the bale will depend on forage analysis.

Forage Management

In the fall and winter, you should consider correcting pH imbalances in the soil. Correcting soil pH may take several months. Take soil samples to find the pH of your soil and any fertilizer requirements. We offer free soil testing in the Howard County Extension Office. Soil samples should be taken from about 4 inches deep using a soil probe or a shovel. Take soil from at least 12 spots in a zigzag pattern over the area you want to test. If you want to sample more than one area, keep the samples separate. Mix the soil from each sample thoroughly and discard any rocks, gravel, and roots. After the soil is dry, place a pint of the soil in a zip-top bag and label it with a name you would recognize.

Wintertime is the time you want to start managing weeds in your warm-season pastures. Weeds are more than just an eye-sore, they also compete with forage species for resources such as water, sunlight, and nutrients. Buttercup and henbit can both be prolific weeds. Herbicides will be very effective on these weeds from late February to early March. To help minimize weed encroachment and make your herbicide control more effective, you should stay on top of your fertilizer program. Applying fertilizer incorrectly may weaken the forage stand.

To promote earlier green-up and grazing of winter annuals, you can start fertilizing specific pastures in February for grazing in March. Do not apply nitrogen fertilizer on good clover stands. At green-up, you should start rotational grazing. If you let the cows chase green grass over the entire farm, any significant growth and sustained grazing will be delayed.

Spring Calving Herds

Cows should be dewormed prior to calving. Being prepared for calving season is very important. Some resources you may want to have available are OB gloves and lubricant, esophageal feeder, bottle and nipple, chain straps/chains, calf puller, sterile syringes and needles, colostrum replacement, electrolytes, etc. You should also be prepared to make some feed adjustments for nursing cows. Lactating cows require 10-11% crude protein and 58-60% TDN. Start using a high magnesium mineral to help prevent grass tetany. Grass tetany



usually occurs when cool season forages begin to grow in the months of February, March, and April. Older lactating cows are more susceptible.

Keeping calving records can be very important for selection and management. Some things to consider are body condition at calving, calving difficulty, calf gender, and calf birth weight. Don't forget to tag calves. This will make records more valuable as the calf can be linked back to its mother.

Castrate male calves at 3 months of age or younger. Bull calves are usually discounted \$5 per hundred weight. Castrating early in life is less stressful on the calf, and the calves castrated at birth will grow at similar rates of gain compared to their intact pasture mates.

Pesticide Applicator Training

There will be a Pesticide Applicator Training on February 15, 2023, in the Extension Homemaker's Educational Center 425 N Second Street, Nashville, Arkansas. The Center is located behind the Howard County Courthouse. The class will begin at 10:00 am. The cost of the class is \$20. Please call our office at 870-845-7517 to register by Monday, February 13, 2023.

Office Closing

The Howard County Extension Office will be closed for the holidays December 23, 2022, through January 3, 2023. The office will re-open on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone!!



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