

Sometimes the grass is weedier on the other side of the fence



Texas groundsel, a winter annual weed that sports yellow flowers, has infested this East Texas pasture. By providing the appropriate nutrients for pastures, producers can help improved forages be more competitive against encroaching weeds, said Dr. Vanessa Corriher, Texas AgriLife Extension Service forage specialist based at Overton.

(Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo by Dr. Vanessa Corriher)

OVERTON -- Farmers and ranchers are seeing more weeds -- both common and unusual varieties -- this year, according to Dr. Vanessa Corriher, Texas AgriLife Extension Service forage specialist based at Overton.

Corriher said producers can expect to have more problems with weeds this year because high fertilizer costs limited their use in many pastures last year. Lower fertility means the improved forages such as Bermuda grass are less able to compete with weeds.

Corriher has been getting a lot of calls, e-mails and letters concerning weeds, but trying to accurately describe a weed over the phone is difficult if not impossible, she said. E-mailed pictures are a little better, but not much. And by the time a mailed weed arrives on her desk, it's usually so desiccated as to be useless for identification.

These problems delay the quick identification of a weed, and when it comes to weed-control, particularly with herbicides, timeliness is critical, she said.

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"In most cases, the county agent will be able to identify the weed and (quickly) recommend control measures for all but the odd-ball weeds," she said.

The most common methods of weed control are mowing or using herbicides, she said. Some other methods of weed control that are often not thought of or skipped include managing pastures for maximum production so as to compete against weeds,

maintaining proper soil pH and fertility and managing grazing pressure to prevent over-grazing.

"Mechanical control of weeds is generally the least effective but the most costly weed management strategy," Corriher said. "Mowing is often used for that instant gratification feeling and/or recreation."

Corriher cautioned that when using herbicides, producers should follow label directions for application rate, timing of application, grazing restrictions, and cleanup and disposal.

And sometimes the perceived weed is not a weed at all from the point of view of livestock, she said.

"Many producers hate to see crab grass in their pastures or hay meadows," she said. "But in terms of nutrition, it can be on par with coastal Bermuda grass."

EPA Regulatory Proposal Will Harm U.S Farmers and Ranchers

USCA (June 4, 2009) - The U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) yesterday sent a letter to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Members of Congress opposing the EPA's proposal to use the Clean Air Act to impose stringent regulations on our small businesses.

The proposal would, for the first time, define greenhouse gas as an endangerment to public health, which would "expose every sector of the U.S. economy - especially the agricultural industry - to unprecedented legal action," according to the letter.

"Since methane emissions - a type of greenhouse gas - are a natural byproduct

of cattle and other livestock, the U.S. cattle industry could be subject to an onslaught of unfair lawsuits, as a new wave of litigation could be created by the EPA's findings that blame livestock producers for a litany of health problems," the group wrote. "The resulting costs of this legal liability, or even the costs of simply preparing for potential litigation, could run many farmers and ranchers out of business at a time when they are coping with one of the worst economic recessions this nation has ever seen."

According to an analysis by USDA, even small ranches and farms would fall under the EPA's microscope. For example, a dairy operation with 25 cows, a ranch with 50 head of cattle, swine

operations with 200 animals and a corn farm of 500 acres would all cross the 100 ton-per-year threshold, thus triggering costly greenhouse gas regulations. In addition to registering its opposition with the EPA, USCA is looking to rally the agricultural community against the proposal, which has a condensed public comment period ending June 23. An issue brief sent by the cattlemen to numerous farm and livestock organizations urged groups to get engaged by 1) requesting a 120-day comment period instead of a 60-day comment period so all interested parties have a chance to weigh in, and 2) submitting a comment to the EPA opposing the proposed health endangerment finding.

Texas crop, weather Texas High Plains dryland cotton in 'dire straits'

COLLEGE STATION -- While irrigated cotton in the Texas High Plains is in pretty good shape, the majority of dryland cotton is in "dire straits" because of lack of rainfall, said a Texas AgriLife Extension Service agronomist.

"We just haven't had a good region-wide dryland rainfall," said Randy Boman, AgriLife Extension Service cotton agronomist, Lubbock. "What we've got is that most of the irrigated cotton has been planted, and the guys are really getting on the dryland now because of the final planting dates for insurance purposes."

About half the 3.4 million acres of cotton that Texas High Plains producers reported they intended

to plant this year are in dryland, Boman said.

But that doesn't mean half the crop is at risk, he said.

"The irrigated crop yields are normally quite a bit higher," he said. "The irrigated crop is a little bit behind right now, based on what I'm seeing. We've been relatively cool in May. Our heat units are tracking pretty well. But we've had a lot of days where we've had cool mornings and the cotton is just not growing like it should for this time of year."

Though soils remained too dry, Boman said dryland producers were being forced to plant anyway to meet crop insurance guidelines.

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