

Don't Confuse Forbs with Weeds

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This happens every time we have a wet spring. I get calls from pasture managers all concerned that their pastures are being taken over with weeds. For many landowners, any plant in the pasture that isn't a grass, is a weed. In reality, many of those broadleaf plants that we often call wildflowers are native plants, forbs we call them, that can be very beneficial to the overall health of the pasture and even utilized by cattle. Quite a few of them are native legumes that can add quite a bit of protein to an animal's diet and is about the only way that nitrogen is restored to the tall grass prairie soil. When you start looking at forbs like leadplant, partridge pea, bundleflower and others, you see that they are very palatable, very nutritious and readily eaten. Things like the scrufpeas, or wild alfalfas are not as highly desired but will be eaten early in the season. Ironically, all these native forbs tend to disappear in over grazed pastures showing that they are good indicators of pasture health. If you have a lot of these native forbs, then that's a good thing. When we have a wet spring, these plants tend to really get off and take a big jump on the native grasses giving the illusion that they are taking over. While there are plants that can certainly be indicators of overgrazing, increasing readily because cattle won't eat them, most of the plants that are out there blooming right now don't fall in that category. If you have concerns about your pastures, give me a call and we'll get together and take a look at the pasture. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Plant Analysis for Nutrient Monitoring

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A few weeks ago I was discussing plant tissue analysis and how this year may be a really good year to do this to see how many nutrients this ongoing rain has taken away from our crops. Probably the crop of greatest concern right now is going to be corn. The hot sunny days last week really perked the corn fields up and I swear they grew a foot. One of the most critical things in doing tissue sampling is to get the right plant parts at the right time. For corn, we'd have three choices. For plants less than a foot tall, take the entire plant, cut it off at the ground. For corn taller than a foot but not yet shooting ears, take the top most fully developed leaves meaning those top leaves which show a leaf collar. Once the plant is shooting ears, you'd take the ear leaf for analysis. If the entire field is looking pretty good, just randomly take samples from 25 to 35 representative plants. If you have problem areas, then take samples from the bad or problem areas and samples from the good areas. It is also often very helpful to take corresponding soil samples from the same areas. When we send the tissue samples in for analysis we can test for N, P and K only or those three plus sulfur, zinc, copper, iron, manganese, calcium and magnesium. I always encourage running the full set of tests as it only costs \$8 more for the micros over just N, P and K. We might as well get it all so we know where we stand. The advantage to getting corn tested soon is that we still have time to get some deficiencies cleared up with some extra fertilizer before the crop gets any bigger. That is if it dries out a little! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Musk Thistle Control

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A lot of rain can expose a lot of flaws. You find out where the low spot in the driveway is. You discover that leak in the roof that you didn't know about and you get to see every single musk thistle that you missed when you were out spraying last fall or earlier this spring. I have seen a lot more musk thistle this spring than I remember in recent years. Unfortunately, by now the plants are blooming nicely which means that they are easy to see and merely spraying isn't going to do the job. Digging the plants up isn't going to cut it either because if the flower is showing any color at all, there will be enough moisture in the plant to allow at least some viable seed to be produced by the dying plant. No, what you need to do now is to first cut off every single flower or flower bud. Place these in a bucket to take home and burn or bury and then spray the rest of the plant. While there are a lot of products listed for treating musk thistle at the rosette stage, either in the spring or the fall, once we are dealing with flowering plants, we don't have a lot of options. You might as well go with Tordon plus 2,4-D. Use a half pint of Tordon plus a quart of 2,4-D in 20 gallons of water and thoroughly spray down the plant. If you are using a 1, 2 or 3 gallon sprayer use a shy half ounce of Tordon and 1.5 ounces of 2,4-D per gallon of water. There have been claims over the years that high rates of Tordon on flowering musk thistle will kill the germination. While it may reduce germination of musk thistle seeds, it doesn't reduce the germination enough to negate the need of clipping those flower heads. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.