

Treating Sericea

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Locally we have a fairly healthy population of sericea lespedeza and we aren't gaining ground on it mainly because land managers aren't staying on top of it. A few scattered plants are overlooked or not given a second thought - but then five years later you have a half acre solid and then you're working up hill to try to get it under control. What we are finding out is that there is no one treatment that will take care of sericea. You need to attack it from multiple angles with multiple forms of treatments. There are no truly effective biological controls. The best approach is going to be herbicide, mowing and even late summer burning. Then you have to stay after it for several years. Sericea lespedeza is a legume and as such, just like alfalfa, it has hard seed that can lay dormant for several years. Prescribed burning in April scarifies and stimulates the seeds to start sprouting. So treatments in June and very early July that contain triclopyr are aimed at setting back the established plants and killing seedlings before they have a chance to get well established. Then you treat again in late summer with metsulfuron, Escort and other herbicides, to further damage the stand and reduce seed production. What we have also found is that doing a late August burning of pastures with sericea reduces seed production to virtually zero. But for the next few weeks focus on treating sericea stands with Remedy Ultra or PastureGard HL. Apply with a thorough soaking spray of 10 to 20 gallons per acre. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Grasshoppers

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Along with chinch bugs, that I talked about last week, dry weather invariably brings along grasshoppers. We haven't seen widespread grasshopper problems since the late 80s or early 90s and we may have just hit and miss issues unless this continues all summer - which it could. What I have noticed as I've been out and about this year is that I am already seeing a lot of little grasshoppers. Most grasshopper species overwinter as an egg case in the ground. The eggs hatch and the small hopper start hopping about and eating. Grasshoppers have an incomplete metamorphosis which means that young grasshoppers look a lot like adult grasshoppers only they don't have functional wings until they become adults. But they can hop and they can eat. With the exception of gardens we don't generally start treating when grasshoppers are small but it would be wise to pay attention to grasshopper populations on field edges and next to native grass. Fortunately many of the newer synthetic pyrethroids are very effective even on larger grasshoppers. Treatment of field edges can often work to keep the populations down as can treatment of grass waterways and native grass fields. With corn we don't worry too much until we have 5 to 8 grasshoppers per square yard just before pollen shed. We don't have a good threshold for grasshopper populations in soybeans. We generally base it on large population on field edges and significant feeding damage on soybean leaves. If you have concerns, call me. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

2017 Farm Income

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The 2017 Executive Summary from the Kansas Farm Management association hit my mailbox last week. As a reminder, the KS Farm Management Association is over 1,000 farms all across the state that pay dues and work with ag economists in record keeping and record analysis. There are big farms and small farms and every imaginable combination. But they are real farmers on real farms and the information that we glean from these operations is amazing and the envy of virtually every ag economist around the country. The records from 2017 are all in and analyzed. The state is broken up in 6 regions, northeast, northcentral, you get the picture and the good news is that the average farm in all six regions made money in 2017. That was not the case in 2016 and 2015. After going through several years of the average farm making over \$100,000 it crashed in 2015 and we had a statewide average of only \$6,700. It rebounded some in 2016, up to \$46,000 and gained more last year at almost \$63,000. Northcentral region was off about \$8,000 from 2016 to 2017 but still in the plus column. On average the northcentral region has stayed in the positive column through this crisis, but based on the weather, we aren't out of the woods yet. Now the rest of the story. Not every farm made money in 2017. 20% of the farms statewide in 2017 lost up to \$50,000. 10% of the farms in 2017 lost over \$50,000. So while there was good news with farm income, there's still issues to address. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Is volunteer corn a threat?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. About 20 years ago, not too many years after roundup ready technology really came onto the scene I saw a soybean field that was very very clean, with the exception of one weed - glyphosate tolerant corn. I remember saying to some producer friends that volunteer corn was going to become a real problem, and they laughed at me. Due to the drought, we may actually have more volunteer corn this year. In normal rainfall years more of the volunteer corn sprouts early allowing more opportunities for control with burn down herbicides. This year, many burn down products may well be down and gone before the corn germinates and emerges. Volunteer corn is highly competitive with corn and soybeans and if you have quite a bit you may want to look at options to control it including certain grass control herbicides in soybeans or even, gasp, even good old cultivation. How much yield can volunteer corn steal? Well, it depends on how much volunteer corn you have. An Iowa State study reported that an average of one volunteer corn plant per 10 foot of row could reduce yield 1.3%. Two plants per 10 foot of row, double that. In a South Dakota study looking at the same thing volunteer corn densities were evaluated from 800 to 14,000 plants per acre. In corn fields those populations reduced yield 0 to 13%. But in soybeans those same populations reduced yield 0% clear up to 54%. If you have a lot of volunteer corn showing up in your fields we may want to talk about options! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

A good year to sharpen the pencil

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Back in 2011 and '12 and '13 it was pretty easy to make money in farming. Yields were good, prices were great - it was the glory days that everyone hoped would continue for ever and we all knew wouldn't. 2015 was the wake up call with crashing farm prices and things started getting tight, really tight. 2016 and '17 were a little better but 2018 seems to have everyone worried. We can pull up all the old worn cliches about working through adversity and blah, blah, blah, that nobody wants to hear. But we need to use times like this to remind us of reality and to look for ways to survive. We do a lot of things in agriculture because of tradition. We do it this way because we've always done it this way. So pull out your record books, sharpen up your pencil (or fire up your spreadsheet if you are so inclined) and look for different ways to do things. Throw all of your plans on the table and take every single one apart and analyze it. Maybe this is the year that you wean in August and sell calves early. Maybe you harvest wheat and instead of planting double crop beans for grain you plant sudangrass to try to get another hay crop. Maybe you leave that alfalfa field one more year just because this fall may not be a good time to replant. Take time to stop and think about everything you do and ask yourself why. Is there some way to keep this piece of machinery running another few years? Can I soil test and make better use of residual nutrients? Remember, everything is fair game when it comes to surviving. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.