Don’t Be In A Hurry to Spray Brush

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I’m Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I have started getting questions about spraying brush already. I think that part of this is because it already feels like late June instead of late May! Having temperatures 8 to 10 degrees above normal will do that to you! The whole concept of treating brush with herbicides depends on application at a time when the plant has reached full leaf stage. You want as much leaf area as possible to absorb the herbicide you are applying. Just as woody plants reach full leaf stage they also usually have the lowest carbohydrate reserves in the roots. The applied herbicide will do maximum damage, hopefully killing the target plant. Apply too early and the plant doesn’t have the leaf area to absorb enough of the herbicide. Plus, the plant is pushing more food up to the leaves than it is pulling down to the roots. If you wait until too late in the season the leaves have often developed a thick leathery surface that inhibits absorption of the herbicide on the leaves. The plant is certainly pulling a lot of stuff down to the roots but the herbicide can’t get into the system. Because of the unusually cold April, woody plants were slow to leaf out. We need to hang on until the first half of June, just like usual before we start treating. Sumac is just now really starting to leaf out. Dogwood is just getting ready to bloom and is still approaching full leaf stage. I think this year we can spray about any time in June with good results. BUT, if drought stress continues, this could hinder optimal control! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I’m Chuck Otte.

Please Spray With Care

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We've got a lot of field work trying to be done on a very compressed schedule. We're running with temperatures well above average and some days are a little windy. One of the things that we HAVE to continue to be very careful of is spray drift. I periodically receive phone calls from rural residents who are dealing with drift issues from agricultural spraying. Granted, ag producers have a right to spray their fields. But you also have a responsibility to try to be a good neighbor. AND with the new labels on some of the dicamba products you've also got a lot of new restrictions in regards to buffer zones, wind speeds, well, just about everything! So here's the whole gist of this. It doesn't matter whether you're a farmer spraying a 300 acre field or a homeowner spraying a 300 square foot piece of lawn. YOU are responsible for using that pesticide product appropriately and legally. If you are spraying anything that contains 2,4-D or dicamba, you need to be aware that these products volatilize readily and they will move - even the newer low volatile formulations will move on you. Many landscape and garden plants are VERY sensitive to these products. In fact it's scary how sensitive some of these plants are. We just have to be good neighbors in town and out in the country. Avoid spraying in breezy, windy conditions or under very warm conditions. It isn't proper use that causes problems with herbicides, it's improper uses and that's what cancels labels! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Poison Hemlock

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The past decade or so I've seen a big explosion in a plant, okay, a weed, called poison hemlock. Poison hemlock is a winter annual. It starts growing in the fall, often looking like a giant carrot plant. It overwinters in this stage and then in April and May it sends up a flower stalk that can reach 6 or 8 feet tall with white flowers that have a rather strong not necessarily pleasant, quite musky in fact, odor. All parts of the plant are poisonous but the root is especially so. Poisonings most often happen when people mistake it for wild carrot or parsnip, dig up the root and eat it. It really is quite poisonous and quite deadly. The problem is that this rascal spreads readily especially around old livestock pens and waste areas along creeks. It is very obvious at this time of year but it is already flowering, making seed and dying. It is very difficult to kill at this time, mainly because it's already dying. Control is best done in the fall, usually October or November when it is starting to grow. Forget about getting poison hemlock with 2,4-D or even dicamba. You'll be better off using something with triclopyr in it or better yet, something Tordon based, like Grazon P+D or something with metsulfuron like Chaparral, Escort XP or Cimarron Plus. Spray in the fall or very early spring - check the label for exact recommendations - use the appropriate spray adjuvant and apply a good thorough soaking spray. Don't let this one get too big on you though or you won't get good control. Treat a couple of years in a row. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soil pH in Continuous No-Till

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One of the things we've noticed about continuous no-till is the stratification of some nutrients and even soil pH. Without the 2 or 3 times a year soil mixing, interesting things start to happen. One of those is changing soil pH, especially in light of more corn production and the heavy amounts of nitrogen being applied. Heavy rates of nitrogen will acidify soil. Given that some of our soil pHs are over 7, sometimes well over 7, this isn't a bad thing. In real field studies of long term continuous no-till we have found that the soil pH in the top inch or two can sometimes be one full pH point lower than 6 to 8 inches deeper. One thing that we need to do, when we are soil testing in no till fields, is to pull samples for pH testing from the top couple of inches, and then from the six inch layer below that just so we can see what's happening. As long as the pH stays above 6.0, I don't even bat an eye. For most crops, I don't get too concerned until we start to get pH levels below 5.5. One area that I do want to be careful though is when we are planting alfalfa. pH levels below 6 is really tough on seedling alfalfa. So if we test and find we have low pH do we have to apply lime and till it in? Fortunately, probably not. We now know that surface applied lime will impact soil pH in the surface 2 to 3 inches and that's probably all we'll need to do to get a good stand of alfalfa established, or even make sure that soybean nodulation is getting active. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

How To Get Extra Forage

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've talked to quite a few producers who are very worried about forage supplies, especially as we head into next winter. First cutting alfalfa is looking good but without rain we won't get much regrowth. Bromegrass is stunted at best and if we get half a crop I'll be surprised. It's far too early to have any idea what the prairie hay crop will be like. So what do you do if you feel you aren't going to have enough hay to get your cowherd through the winter? We do have an opportunity to try to grow some emergency summer annual forages. I've seen cereal grains, including triticale and oats grown this way, even rye and wheat can be used, but they all have certain potential issues. We can also look at any of the various sorghum options - grain sorghum, forage sorghum, sudax or sudangrass are all well adapted to heat. There's also hybrid pearl millet that has very good forage quality and good regrowth. It's very well suited to haying or grazing. Any forage has a potential of accumulating nitrates. Some may be somewhat worse than others and testing is probably the only way to know for sure. Any of the sorghums, sudans or crosses also have a potential for prussic acid. Both prussic acid and nitrates can be fatal, but with nitrates you at least have a bigger window of opportunity to catch it and correct it. Therefore, whatever you do, let's talk about nitrate testing prior to utilization. If you have questions about any of these, plesae don't hesitate to call and ask me! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.