



New Release
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Grassbur Control in Pastures and Hay Meadows

I have been getting numerous questions about grassbur control in pastures and hay meadows this year. Grassburs like to grow in sandy soils with very little competition from our warm season forages. They have a negative effect for animals that graze on them and the hay that is produced when they have seed heads present. The grassburs cause pain, discomfort and even infection to the animals that are grazing them. They also have a negative effect on hay quality and greatly reduce forage value. There are two approaches to control grassburs using herbicides. One is using pre-emergent herbicides. There are currently two pre-emergent herbicides labeled to control grassburs. One is Prowl® H2O and other formulations of pendimethalin can be applied as a pre-emergent control of grassbur on dormant bermudagrass at rates from 1.1 to 4.2 quarts per acre. The tighter the soil texture the more product is needed for proper pre-emergent control. Good results can be obtained from pendimethalin if it is properly incorporated by at least 0.5” to 0.75” of rainfall or irrigation within 7 days of application to be effective. The other pre-emergent herbicide just got a pasture label in Texas. It is called Rezilon® (active ingredient is Indaziflam). Use rates are 3-5 fluid ounce per acre. Rezilon® requires rainfall of 0.25-0.5 inches of rain or irrigation to be effective. Herbicides need to be evenly distributed across the field to ensure that there are no skips. The shorter the grass is, the better. If you have good herbicide to soil contact, the better the pre-emergent weed control is. There are no grazing restriction. There is a 40 day hay harvesting restriction when using Rezilon® when using rates above 3 oz/acre.

The second approach is to use a post emergent herbicide that is labeled for grassbur control in pastures and/or hay meadows. Currently, there are three options available for post emergent control. One product is Pastora® and it must be applied to small grassbur plants (1-1.5 inches tall) at rates of 1.0 to 1.5 oz per acre. It is only labeled for use on bermudagrass, so applying it on any other type of pasture or hayfield is illegal and could cause severe injury. There are no grazing or haying restrictions associated with the use of Pastora®.

Another post-emergence treatment is Roundup PowerMax®, which is labeled for use on bermudagrass hayfields immediately after the first hay cutting at a rate of 11 ounces per acre. This application also will control many annual grasses other than grassbur. Some stunting of perennial grasses will occur if broadcast application is made when plants are not dormant. Higher application rates may be used for hard-to-control weeds; however, higher rates will cause stand reduction in the forage species. It is important to treat as soon as possible after the first hay cutting for two reasons. First, there will be less crop injury since there will be less bermudagrass leaf area to take up the herbicide. Second, the product must contact the grassbur plants while they are small; this is less likely to happen if the bermudagrass has regrown and is covering the grassbur. A maximum of 2 quarts per acre per year can be applied with no grazing restrictions.

The third post-emergence product should be used with caution. The active ingredient, imazapic, sold under the trade names such as Plateau® and Panoramic®, will stunt bermudagrass growth for a period of at least 30 days. Some varieties, such as Jiggs and World Feeder, are more prone to injury than others. It is labeled for use in most perennial grass species, including native range. It is an excellent herbicide, with both preemergent and post-emergent activity and is only recommended where controlling grassbur is more important than forage growth. It is relatively inexpensive and has a wide weed control spectrum. There are no grazing restrictions, but a seven-day haying restriction applies when using imazapic.

Usually, we recommend applying a pre-emergent herbicide from February 1-March 1 for grassbur control. This has been a warm winter so far. I am recommending applying a pre-emergent herbicide this year as early as possible.

When applying a post-emergent herbicide, timing is critical. The younger the grassbur is, the better control you will have. Once grassburs are controlled, follow soil test results for lime and fertilizer applications. Grass burs thrive on poor nutrient soils. Remember, the best form of weed control is a thick dense growing forage. Always follow the herbicide label for rates, mixing instructions, timing of application and for which weeds it will control. Remember, the label is the law.

Trade names of commercial products used in this news article are included only for better understanding and clarity. Reference to commercial products or trade names are made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas A&M University System is implied. Readers should realize that results from one experiment do not represent conclusive evidence that the same response would occur where conditions vary. If you have any questions, please contact Clint Perkins at the Smith County Extension Office at 903-590-2980.