

# Forages



## WEED CONTROL IN TALL FESCUE

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Pasture weed control starts with proper grazing/haying management and a good fertility program. If good management is practiced, weeds will have less opportunity to become established. It is generally easier to keep weeds from becoming established than to clean them out after they are established. Further, once weeds are established, one application of herbicide is seldom adequate.

When a weed problem is encountered, two actions must be taken. First, the one discussed in this leaflet, is to use the proper control methods. The second, equally as important, is to identify the cause of the weed problem and correct it. The most common causes of weed infestations are low pH, low or unbalanced fertility, improper cutting or grazing management, and weed seed sources in the fence rows or otherwise near the pasture.

Proper control starts with the identification of the target weed species. Pasture weeds may be annuals or perennials, warm or cool season, grasses, broadleaves, or sedges, and may reproduce vegetatively and/or by seed. All of these influence the choice, timing, and rate of herbicide used. Shotgun type approaches to weed control are seldom successful.

### Establishment

With the loss of Simazine, there are currently no preemergence herbicides labeled for tall fescue pastures.

If a tall fescue pasture becomes weedy during establishment, there are a limited number of herbicide options available and none for fescue/clover mixtures. A serious weed problem in a mixed grass/clover pasture may be reduced by a short grazing period with a large number of cattle. The idea is to apply enough grazing pressure so as to encourage cattle to nonselectively remove all standing herbage, down to a certain grazing height, but to remove them before much damage is done to the tall fescue and clover. This is best done when the soil is firm.

In a pure tall fescue stand, the early winter weeds such as henbit and chickweed can be controlled with low to medium rates of 2,4-D. Carefully read and follow all labeled instructions. Some pasture herbicides may injure or stunt tall fescue.

### Established Stands

Marketed under several trade names, 2,4-D is effective in controlling many annual and peren-

nial broadleaf weeds if applied at 1.0 to 2.0 lb Ai/A. The higher rate should be used for perennials. Repeated applications may be needed for deep-rooted perennials. Spray when weeds are 4 to 6 in tall but before they reach heading. Treat wild onion and garlic in both spring and fall and repeat for at least two seasons. Do not use on grass/legume mixtures. Keep dairy cattle off of treated pastures for 7 days after application.

Banvel (dicamba) is effective in controlling many broadleaf weeds, including dogfennel, pigweed, and knawel, when applied at the rate of 0.25 to 1.0 lb Ai/A to weeds that are 4 to 6 in tall and actively growing. This herbicide may be used at higher rates (up

to 8 lb Ai/A) for hard-to-control weeds such as blackberry, bracken fern, and multiflora rose. Milking dairy cows should be held off pasture for 7 days where 0.5 lb Ai/A was used and 21 days where 1 lb Ai/A is used. Do not graze beef cattle on treated pastures within 30 days of slaughter. Do not harvest hay within 37 days of application of 0.5 lb Ai/A or 57 days of 1 lb Ai/A.

Mixtures of 2,4-D and dicamba (such as Weed-master) are available. These products should be used according to directions on the label and with the restrictions on the label kept in mind.

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