

Weekly Ag Report
Tom Getts, UCCE Weed Ecology and Cropping Systems Advisor
October 21, 2015

Morning, this is your weekly Ag report. I'm Tom Getts from the Lassen County Extension office. Fall is upon us, one of my favorite seasons of the year. Crisp cool nights, leaves turning, all the plants and animals preparing for what I'm hoping is a wet winter. Just the other day I was talking to Craig Hemphill, our County Ag Commissioner, and we were discussing how fall is a great time to get after your weeds! Fall efforts can be focused on winter annuals, biennials, and on those pesky deep rooted perennials.

Annual plants just grow for one season. Winter annuals germinate in the fall, grow until it is too cold, and mature early the next growing season. Cheatgrass, medusahead, tumble mustard, tansy mustard and Sheppard's purse are some common winter annuals. These species can be problematic in rangelands, pastures, or in the first cuttings of grass hay or alfalfa. Winter annuals are cold tolerant and will continue to grow after some desirable plants have gone dormant. So after a freeze is often a good time to target them. Generally in the fall the seedlings are susceptible to physical or chemical control methods.

Biennial plants grow for two years. The first year they will just have leaves, often as a basal rosette. The second year they will "bolt" sending up a tall stalk with flowers. Many thistles such as Scotch bull and musk are biennial plants, where some other biennials are spotted knapweed and Mediterranean sage. The good thing about these plants is that it takes two years to make seeds, and you can kill the rosettes before they ever have a chance! Fall can be an effective time to treat these rosettes by digging or pulling small patches. Herbicide applications can be more feasible on larger patches. It is much easier to control a small rosette, especially for scotch thistle which can grow over five feet tall the second year!

Perennial weeds live for many years, and are often the most difficult weeds to control wherever they grow. Once established their extensive root systems will continue to resprout year after year, even after control efforts! Perennial weeds sometimes can be suppressed by mowing, burning, or intensive grazing, but are often not controlled. Cultivation can actually chop up the perennial roots spreading them throughout the field, making infestations much worse! In the fall, perennial weeds are shutting down for the year moving sugars into their roots to store energy. Herbicide applications are often very effective on perennial weeds, because the herbicides can move down deep into the roots with the sugars. Bindweed and Canada thistle can be effectively controlled while still actively growing in the fall. Basal regrowth of whitetop can be susceptible to fall applications, although the bud stage is also very effective. This is the best time to of year to treat Russian knapweed with applications following a frost.

Getting after your weeds in the fall is effective, and can save time and effort the following growing season! If an herbicide is used, make sure to read and follow the directions on the label! Not only is it the label the law, but lots of research goes into creating labels to ensure weeds will be effectively controlled, while protecting the applicator and the environment.

If you have a question, feel free to shoot me an email, or give me a call. You can find my contact information on the Lassen County Extension web site. Until next time...