

Weekly Ag Report
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Frosty mornings and the sound of geese as they head to the grain fields are definite signs that fall is here and winter is headed our way. This is Cheryl Lauritsen from the Lassen County Agriculture Department and these past chilly mornings gave me the inspiration for this morning's Agriculture Report.

Fall is often a bittersweet time for those of us in the Honey Lake Valley. Vegetable gardens are on their way out; the last of the hay is ready to be cut and baled; and its time to bring the cattle down out of the mountains for shipping to winter pastures.

Fall is also a great time to think about treating those perennial and biennial weeds that are so difficult to get rid of. These weeds are aggressive competitors in cultivated fields, pastures, along roadsides and in undisturbed areas. Some spread by seed, but others, such as tall whitetop and Russian knapweed spread by seed and rhizomal root systems. Plants with rhizomal root systems can spread from any 1-inch piece of root that accidentally gets left behind, so it is suggested that tall whitetop and Russian knapweed not be hand grubbed. Besides being hard to get rid of, Russian knapweed is also an allelopathy. If allowed to take over an area, it will reduce desirable vegetation and prevent it from growing back. It is also poisonous to horses.

Since Russian knapweed has such an extensive root system, mechanical control is not effective. Tilling spreads root fragments, mowing before bloom prevents spread by seed, but only for that year, and burning hasn't been found to be effective.

Treatment using herbicides has been found to be successful if timed correctly. The use of herbicides at the late bud to early bloom stage works pretty well, but researchers have found that Russian knapweed is better treated after the first frost when its system is translocating nutrients to be stored in the root system for the future. The herbicide will be sent to the root system along with the nutrients giving you a better chance for control.

Of course, just one treatment won't be enough. It may take several years to completely get rid of the problem, so you will have to stay on top of it until you get the results you are looking for. Once most of the above ground portion of the plant is gone, the introduction of a competitive plant species will help to prevent the return of Russian knapweed.

In closing, remember, when using chemicals to treat Russian knapweed or any other problematic weed, always remember to read and follow the herbicide label. This will ensure that you get good results in a manner that is safe for you and the environment.

Enjoy this nice weather and have a great rest of your week.