

## Winter Weed Control in Pastures



**Buttercup control** - Most producers think winter time is a dead period for weed control in pastures. However, winter weeds like buttercup will be blooming soon causing pastures to be covered with a sea of yellow flowers. Buttercup, a robust seed-producing annual is probably the most common and noticeable winter weed infesting pastures. I cannot tell you how many calls I get on buttercup in late April when the plants are in full bloom. By April and May, buttercup has grown all winter long and produced thousands of seeds, adding to the weed seed bank in the soil. If you do nothing this year to control buttercup, even more seeds will be added to the soil seed bank. If you wait till late spring to apply herbicides, you are really waiting too late to get the highest level of control, plus you will delay pasture green up.

The good news is that buttercup is cheap and easy to control because it is highly sensitive to 2,4-D, especially when this herbicide is timed correctly. Research conducted at the LSU AgCenter has shown that 2,4-D applied at 1 pint/acre during the months of December, January, and early February are very effective in controlling buttercup selectively in pastures, including ryegrass pastures. More good news-- buttercup is highly sensitive to 2,4-D but white clover seems to come through these applications with minimal damage. There will be some initial herbicide damage on the white clover, but you will be surprised to see its remarkable recovery. The key for white clover safety is not to apply more than 1 pint of 2,4-D per acre. Please note that despite white clover's tolerance of this application of 2,4-D, other clover types are not nearly as tolerant.

**Recommendation:** Don't let buttercup linger in your pastures. Pick a warm day this winter (2,4-D works best with temperatures above 60 degrees) and eliminate it from your pastures with 2,4-D @ 1 pt/A.

## Spot Thistle Control in Pastures

**Spot Thistle Control** – The huge thistles that common in pastures in Louisiana are biennials. Biennials live for two years and reproduce only by seed. After germination, they form a prostrate rosette ranging from 4 to 18 inches in diameter before becoming dormant in the summer and emerge again in the fall. Exposure to cold winter temperatures is necessary to trigger these thistles to flower the second year after sending up a flower stalk (called bolting). Each plant can send up several stalks and produce numerous flower heads, each with viable seeds. After flowering, biennial thistles die in the second year. The only way to cut down on thistle populations is to destroy the plants before seed production occurs. Thistles are not hard to control with the right herbicides like Grazon Next, Grazon P+D, and Chaparral. The problem is that these herbicides decimate clover stands. The difficulty is controlling thistle without destroying stands of clover.

Spot treating thistles with inexpensive herbicides like glyphosate or 2,4-D could be one of the most effective ways to selectively control thistles with minimal damage to clover stands. In order to test the efficacy of these two herbicides on thistles, a field study was conducted on November 11, 2015 to evaluate spot treatments of 2% volume per volume solutions (2.5 oz. of herbicide/1 gallon of water) of glyphosate or 2,4-D. Plants were treated prior to bolting. Thistle diameters ranged from 15 to 35” at the time of treatment. The treatments were replicated 10 times and included an unsprayed check. See table below.

Herbicide	Rate	% Thistle control 3 weeks after treatment	% Thistle control 6 weeks after treatment
Glyphosate	2% v/v solution	100	100
2,4-D	2% v/v solution	60	100



**Results**—Spot glyphosate applications provided 100% thistle control at both the 3 and 6 weeks after treatment data collection period. As expected, glyphosate caused localized damage to the treated bahiagrass/clover. Thistles treated with 2,4-D gave only 60% control 3 weeks after treatment. However, by 6 weeks after treatment, all thistles treated with 2,4-D were killed. Spot 2,4-D treatments were less damaging to the bahiagrass/clover.

**Recommendation:** Apply 2,4-D in spot treatments. The rate is 2.5 oz/1 gallon of water

## Hack and Squirt Tallow Tree Control in the Winter

**Control Large Tallow Trees Now** – Chinese tallow trees are the most invasive trees in wetland areas and one of the top weeds infesting pastures. The ideal time to make broadcast applications for smaller tallow trees in pastures is during the growing season, spring through late summer. Large tallow trees are tremendous seed sources, and birds spread these seeds for miles infesting land everywhere. Individual trees can be killed year-round with the “hack and squirt” method and the herbicide, Tordon RTU. Tordon RTU, not a restricted use herbicide, comes in an easy to use squirt bottle that makes it really simple to apply. It is highly effective because it contains picloram, the magic bullet for tallow trees.

The “hack and squirt method,” requires you make an injury just through the bark of the tallow tree with a sharp hatchet or axe every three inches of trunk diameter. For example, a 6 inch diameter tree would get 2 hacks. Then, squirt about a tablespoon of Tordon RTU in each hack. Expect 100% tallow control by next spring. I have never seen it fail to kill a tallow tree. A word of caution: even though you are treating individual tallow trees, non-target trees can still be injured or killed. Picloram may actually get exuded out the roots of the tree that you intended to kill, and kill another tree located within the root zone of the target tree. That non-target tree may be another tallow tree or a prize pecan or oak tree. Make sure desirable trees are a safe distance away, at least 2 ½ times the dripline of the treated tree before using. Follow all label precautions.

**Recommendation:** Treat large dormant tallow trees this winter with Tordon RTU using the hack and squirt method described above.