

David Hallauer  
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

## **Fall Musk Thistle Control**

There are lots of grassland weeds more bothersome than musk thistle – sericea lespedeza and hemp dogbane come to mind. That doesn't mean musk thistle isn't important. It is still a noxious weed and left unchecked can become a real problem in our grasslands.

With most other weeds giving up for the year, fall can be a good time to focus on musk thistle. Because they're considered a biennial or a winter annual, they have a rosette stage in the fall and early spring prior to bolting early the next summer. This fall rosette stage is the time when it's easiest to control. Not only are the rosettes relatively easy to find, other plants that could be injured by offsite herbicide movement are mostly dormant.

The application window for fall applications is fairly wide, with control possible until the ground is frozen, and plants have shut down until spring. Light freeze events will damage plants, but as long as green tissue exists, plants are still susceptible to chemical controls.

There are lots of active ingredients available to control musk thistles. Dicamba and 2,4-D containing products – alone or in combination – can yield good results (one KSU study showed better fall application results with LVE formulations of 2,4-D vs. amine formulations). Other active ingredients include picloram, aminopyralid and metsulfuron. Picloram and aminopyralid containing products will provide fall control plus get some of the emerging seedlings next spring.

When possible, select a warm, sunny day to spray. Dry weather this fall may reduce control levels. If you want to look further at products/rates, the 2023 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide (online at <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/CHEMWEEDGUIDE.pdf> or upon request via any District Extension Office – drop me a line at [dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu) and we'll get you a book...) is a great resource. Local noxious weed departments can also be a great resource, for both recommendations and product sales.

Ross Mosteller  
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

## **Soybean Residue, a Forage Crop?**

If anyone follows my columns on a regular basis, you might think I'm a broken record. Forage inventory this fall is tight, across a wide region of the heartland. As combines pull out of fields, a whole new source of possible forage and grazing days comes into discussion. Crop residues offer a cost-effective opportunity for cows to graze or for baling and winter feeding. Corn and sorghum residues get most of the attention, for good reason as they make excellent fall feed, but soybean residues have a place in this discussion as well.

Soybeans are very high in protein and fat, which stands to reason in the ways they are utilized in the industry. Even the most efficient harvesters will leave a few beans in the field and that is what the livestock will forage for first. At about 40% crude protein and 20% fat, the beans alone can be a good feed source when fed in moderation. The high fat content can cause issues with rumen function, especially in young calves, so before letting animals out to graze a bean field, be sure to clean up any piles of spilled grain. If the crop field has waterways or other grass buffer areas, this helps with rumen and ration balance. These types of fields make excellent candidates for soybean residue grazing. If water is available, this becomes even more desirable.

Soybean residues, on the other hand, have a much different feed composition. Empty bean pods and stems contain only 4 to 6% CP and the TDN is only 35 to 45%. Soybean leaves are slightly higher in protein at 12%, but the leaves break down quickly and are usually no longer available for consumption once harvest has been completed. Cows will eat this residue, but don't necessarily like it. The more digestible portion of this residue breaks down quickly, so the grazing window tends to be shorter than other crop residue options.

All that said, soybean residues will not meet the nutritional requirements of a dry cow, even if there is some grain left in the field. All is not lost, because there is still opportunity to graze soybean residue in conjunction with a supplemented high-quality feed. Not only does this provides rest to pastures, but can help stretch feed resources while still ensuring the cow is properly fed. There is some benefit to nutrient recycling that occurs as the cow processes and redistributes the residue. Baled soybean residue can be used as a roughage source in rations if that is a needed component for your operation.

As with any discussion of utilizing crop residues, there becomes the discussion of pros/cons to the cropping enterprise. Soil compaction, nutrient removal/recycling, livestock trailing, getting adequate compensation from the livestock enterprise, etc... all need to be looked at and evaluated. The livestock side of the equation looks at fencing, water, distance from operation, etc... This discussion can be saved for another day, but managed appropriately, this can be a win-win for both crop and livestock enterprises.

So, to summarize, soybean residue can be used to rest pasture and stretch feed resources, but residue alone will not meet any class of livestock's nutrient requirements. Second trimester, dry cows are likely the best choice for livestock to utilize these residues. Keep in mind, supplementation will be need if you decide to utilize your soybean residue. Proper grazing management and an open fall weather wise, makes this a more attractive option.

Laura Phillips  
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

## **Prepare Your Lawn Mower for Winter**

As winter hits we all get to cross “mowing the lawn” off our to-do lists for a while. But before completely move on from lawn mowing, Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham recommends a few mower maintenance steps before we let them sit idle in our sheds for the winter.

“Make sure you drain the gas tank of gasoline-powered engines or use a gasoline stabilizer,” Upham said. “Untreated gasoline can become thick and gummy.”

Spark plugs should be replaced. Before putting the new one in, place a few drops of oil inside the hole to lubricate the cylinder. Battery terminals usually corrode during the season, so they should be cleaned with a wire-bristle brush before being removed and stored for winter.

“If you remove the battery, be sure to store it in a protected location for the winter (a cool basement works best),” Upham said.

Cleaning and storing mowers properly are just one part of end of-season-care. Upham also suggests using this time to sharpen mower blades.

“Sharpening rotary mower blades is fairly straightforward,” said Upham, who listed the steps to guide the process:

- Check for major blade damage and replace what can't be fixed.
- Remove grass and debris with a damp cloth. Dry the blade before sharpening.
- Use a grinding wheel or hand-file to remove nicks from the cutting edge. If using a grinding wheel, match the existing edge angle to the wheel. If hand-filing, file at the same angle as the existing edge.
- File edges to 1/32 inch, or about the size of a period at the end of a sentence.
- Avoid overheating of the blade, as this could damage it.
- For optimum winter storage, clean the blade with solvent or oil. Avoid using water because it will promote rust.

“Following these tips can help you better prepare your mower for winter storage and also save you some steps this coming spring,” Upham said

Teresa Hatfield  
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

### **Hospice Care: Myths vs. Facts**

In February of 2023, President Jimmy Carter went on to hospice care. At age 99, President Carter is the oldest living president in our nation's history. Carter has had several health issues in recent years, including cancer. The Carter Center stated, "After a series of short hospital stays, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter today decided to spend his remaining time at home with his family and receive hospice care instead of additional medical intervention." Carter's decision to start hospice care has spurred the discussion of what hospice care is and isn't.

Hospice care promotes quality of life rather than extending life through treatments and procedures that could cause pain and discomfort. Hospice seeks to provide caring and comfort in the last stages of life. This care treats the whole person and strives to provide physical comfort and spiritual wellness. Hospice provides care at any place the patient calls home. The hospice team works with the patient and family to determine the scope of care. Hospice can also provide respite care to family caregivers, allowing them time to rest and recuperate. Patients are cared for in a hospice facility or beds in nursing homes or hospitals.

To be eligible for hospice care, a patient's physician must state that they believe you have six months or less to live. You elect to receive care that will make you more comfortable, not care that will cure your condition. Treatments relieve symptoms related to your illness. The primary purpose of hospice care is to improve your quality of life. People can continue to receive care from hospice if their physician continues to certify that they have less than six months to live. People can choose to end hospice care and return to curative care anytime. In the case of President Carter, it has been over six months since he started receiving hospice care, so his physician would have had to restate that he still expected to live six months or less.

A myth of hospice care is that it is only for the last weeks or days of one's life; for many, deciding on hospice care is difficult. Many people assume that you have given up when you choose to receive hospice. This perception has led many people to postpone hospice care, not allowing them to receive the benefits it can provide. People who delay going on to hospice do not experience the benefits of pain and symptom control that could extend the quality of their lives. Therefore, one of the problems with hospice is that people need to utilize it sooner.

You, your family, and your doctor can work together to decide when hospice care should start.

Many assume that the cost of hospice care is prohibitive. Medicare Part A will cover 100% of the cost, with a \$5.00 co-pay on hospice medications. Many private insurance plans will also cover the cost of hospice care. Ask your insurance carrier about the cost and also for home care.

Hospice care does not end when the patient dies. Hospice includes offering bereavement care to families. Grief counseling is available up to a year after the patient's death. Social workers can support family members after death by connecting them with other community resources and survivor benefits.

Lastly, it is crucial to consider and think about your options before you and your family face this decision. Ensure you have your Advance Healthcare Directives in place before a health crisis happens. K-State Research and Extension has forms for you to complete: the Power of Attorney for Healthcare, Living Will, HIPPA release form, and the Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) forms in the Meadowlark Extension District offices in Holton, Oskaloosa, and Seneca. Have the conversation with your family.

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No news article this week