

## **Spray now to control weeds in cool-season forage food plots**

Every spring, I get calls asking what to spray to control weeds in wildlife food plots. In many cases, winter annual weeds (such as chickweed, purple deadnettle, and henbit) have become well-established, flowered, and are producing seed. By April, it is too late to worry with spraying cool-season weeds because they are mature. Most weeds are most susceptible to herbicides when young. Herbicide labels indicate the height various weeds should be sprayed for optimal results. For cool-season forage food plots (such as clovers, chicory, oats, wheat, rape), the best time to control cool-season weeds is fall through mid-winter.

Before an herbicide can be selected for application, weeds must be identified. If you are unable to identify weeds, buy a weed identification guide with good color pictures. *A Guide to Wildlife Food Plots and Early Successional Plants* provides pictures and identification tips for more than 250 commonly occurring plants, and has complete information on herbicide applications for various food plots. If you are still unsure of what weeds you have, ask your extension agent to help with identification. After you have identified the weed, select an herbicide that will control the weed **and** includes a label for the crop you are growing.

To control or reduce coverage of grasses (such as cheat, bluegrass, or tall fescue) in clover plots, use a grass-selective herbicide (such as clethodim). To control forb weeds (such as the winter annuals listed above) in wheat, oats, or cereal rye, use a forb-selective herbicide (such as 2,4-D, Banvel, Clarity, or Harmony Extra). 2,4-DB (such as Butyrac 200) can be used to control several forb weeds in clover plots. In addition, imazethapyr (such as Pursuit) can be used to control several forb and grass weeds in clover plots. Remember to add the appropriate surfactant to all postemergence herbicides.

Be aware effectiveness on some weeds vary with different herbicides. Refer to herbicide labels for a list of weeds controlled. You should always read the herbicide label prior to application and follow the label instructions concerning precautions, rates, and other application information. The herbicides listed above are only possible suggestions and are not meant to imply approval of those products to the exclusion of others.

Although the weeds in your food plots may be small in fall or winter, this is the time to spray—prior to weeds flowering and producing seed. Getting rid of weeds now will prevent problems with competition later and promote increased forage production for wildlife. For additional information and herbicide recommendations when managing food plots, refer to *A Guide to Wildlife Food Plots and Early Successional Plants*.

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