

Control Winter Annual Weeds Now

This fall has been great for pennycress, mustards, henbit, and downy brome to get started in your alfalfa. Treat them now if you want to avoid heavy weed pressure next spring. Stay tuned.

This has been a nice fall. Pleasant weather has blessed many areas and much alfalfa still is green after a few overnight freezes.

I hate to spoil this pleasant scenario, but it also has been a great fall for winter annual weeds to get started in that green alfalfa. Check your fields and you might find lots of small henbit plants or mustard rosettes or short grass seedlings of downy brome. This density and robust start suggests heavy weed growth next spring. If left uncontrolled they could grow rapidly, reducing alfalfa yield, thinning stands, and lowering forage quality.

To avoid next spring's weed infestation, spray fields before soils freeze up. Probably the three best herbicides to use right now are Sencor, Sinbar, and Velpar. All three do an excellent job of controlling pennycress, mustards, and downy brome. Raptor might be a better choice, though, if henbit is your biggest problem.

Now you might be thinking - I can wait until early next spring to spend money on these herbicides to spray for these weeds.

And you're right - you can wait and be successful with spring spraying. The risk with this thinking, though, is that spring spraying must be done before alfalfa greens up or you will injure your alfalfa plants. Usually, there are only a few days in spring where alfalfa is dormant, the weeds are actively growing, and it's not too wet or windy. Most of the time, fields don't get sprayed at all or they get sprayed late and alfalfa suffers some setback.

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