

Controlling Eastern Redcedars in Pastures

Eastern redcedar trees seem to be exploding in many area pastures. These trees reduce forage production, make animal handling difficult, and encourage pastures to shift from warm-season to cool-season grasses.

Cedar control can be achieved using herbicides, cutting, or fire. By far the least expensive, when it can be used safely, is fire. But the effectiveness of fire declines as trees get large. Herbicides like Spike, Tordon, and Velpar applied directly to the soil beneath the tree work very well, but they're time consuming and more expensive. While cutting can be less expensive, it is even more time consuming, especially if cut trees need to be removed.

Recent research in Nebraska has shown that a combination of control measures can make use of the strengths of each method while overcoming most disadvantages. For best results, a prescribed fire is needed to kill many smaller trees and to weaken or improve accessibility to larger trees. It also can be used periodically, maybe every four to eight years, to eliminate new infestations.

After the prescribed burn, it usually is best to wait a year before using herbicides or cutting to complete the job because some trees that appear to survive the fire will die. This minimizes the number of trees to cut or treat with herbicides.

Local extension offices (in Nebraska) have an extension circular with information to help you rid your grasslands of this pest. NOTE: Extension Circular EC186 'Integrated Management of Eastern Redcedar' is available online at: <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/ec186.pdf>

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