

## Pasture Weed Control in Summer

Early to mid-June is a popular time to spray pasture weeds and woody plants. I'm not always sure, though, that it's the smart thing to do. Why do you spray weeds in pasture? Is it to kill plants that are poor forage – or is it just force of habit and to make the pasture look nicer?

Now I've got to admit, I often suggest using herbicides in pastures. But the more experience I get with grazing and pasture management, the less spraying I do. In fact, anytime a pasture is sprayed, it indicates that grazing has not been as effective as it could be or that the owner wants a quick fix.

Okay, what am I talking about? Well, several things really. **First**, for pasture to be profitable, it must have high management input but controlled dollar input. And spraying costs money. Money we might save with better management. **Second**, livestock eat many plants we call weeds. And when they do, these plants are no longer weeds. In fact, many weeds can be good feed if grazed while young and tender. **Third**, unpalatable weeds usually become established in pastures after grass is weakened by severe grazing, and they thrive when grazing management fails to encourage vigorous grass regrowth. **And finally**, unless pasture and livestock are managed to benefit both plants and animals, the weeds will be back despite your spraying.

So why spray pastures? If you graze properly but you wish to speed up the process of replacing uneaten weeds with vigorous grass, that's a very good reason. Otherwise, spraying may be simply cosmetic and a waste of money.

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