

Controlling Early Spring Weeds in Native Grass

Downy brome and smooth brome. Cheatgrass and wild oats. It seems everyone has problems with early spring weeds in native grasses. How do you get rid of weeds like wild bromes in native grass? Herbicides and grazing are options in the right situation.

First you must realize that seed of these grasses lasts about 3 years in the soil, so the problem may repeat itself for several years. In grasslands dominated by warm-season grasses, one option is to spray 1 pint per acre of glyphosate, like Roundup, early this spring after the weedy bromes green up but before warm-season grasses start growing. This should solve the problem for this year and knock out other early weeds like bluegrass without harming your warm-season grasses. Another option is to use 4 to 6 ounces of Plateau herbicide or its “generic” and get similar results. And with Plateau, residual herbicide activity also will control some later emerging weeds as well.

If herbicides are not desired the job is tougher. You need to limit seed production with grazing. Begin grazing as soon as these bromes green up this spring, which could be any day now with our warm weather. Using these pastures for calving could be a good option. Graze very hard to keep seedheads from developing as long as possible. Eventually these grasses will form heads just an inch or two above the soil surface and grazing no longer will help.

Now comes the tough part. You must remove your animals from this area for a month to six weeks to let the desired grass grow and regain some vigor. Feed hay if necessary. Repeat this hard early grazing for a couple springs and you should start seeing results.

You have the tools to control these weeds; just use them right.

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