

CHECK FIELDS FOR PALMER AMARANTH



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A major concern in Nebraska is the weed Palmer amaranth. While I have not seen major infestations of it in the area, I know there are some fields where it is increasing and spreading in southeast Nebraska. Earlier this week I was in a corn field with some Palmer amaranth that had recently been sprayed. While it appeared to be dying, it was still alive and may continue to grow and produce seed. Palmer amaranth is in the pigweed family and the major problem is that it has developed resistance to several herbicides. It is one of the hardest weeds to control in row-crop production in the United States.

Palmer amaranth has been a problem in southern United States for several years. It has developed resistance to glyphosate in soybean and cotton rotations where farmers have used Roundup Ready soybeans and Roundup Ready cotton in their cropping system. One way it has spread to other parts of the country is in cottonseed meal fed to cattle, especially dairy cattle where their manure is spread on cropland and Palmer amaranth seed is in the manure.

In southwest Nebraska glyphosate-resistant Palmer amaranth is causing all kinds of problems. Palmer amaranth actually thrives under hot conditions, so when the corn and soybeans are under stress, Palmer is still growing and outcompetes corn and soybeans. It is also a prolific seed producer. The best method of controlling these resistant weeds is to limit their seed production by alternating herbicides, combining several herbicides with glyphosate in treating weed problems or even hand-walking fields. It is important to recognize fields that have herbicide-resistant Palmer amaranth so you can prevent them from producing seed. If you think you may have Palmer amaranth in a field, do whatever you can to limit seed production. There have actually been some populations of Palmer amaranth showing resistance to 2,4-D and dicamba in Kansas. Recent research at Kansas State University, shows promise for the use of cereal rye or wheat as a cover crop in slowing down early spring emergence and growth of Palmer Amaranth. If it becomes a problem in southeast Nebraska, it may be a valuable tool to use. Including small grains into a crop rotation also is beneficial in reducing the impact of Palmer Amaranth in crop fields.

If you have questions about Palmer amaranth, contact your local Extension Educator in your county or you can contact me, Gary Lesoing at glesoing2@unl.edu , (402) 274-4755 or (402) 274-9639 (cell).

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