



Boulder County Small Acreage Management Newsletter

Summer 2010

<http://www.extension.colostate.edu/boulder/acreage.shtml>

From the SAM Coordinator

Where has summer gone? Hopefully, you have received some moisture over the last few days. We do need the moisture to have pastures head into winter in good condition. You need to have your animals in the dry lot to allow your pasture to prepare for winter. Once your grass is dormant, then you can let your animals back out to graze this year's residue.

Fall is a good time to do perennial weed control. The weeds like the pasture grasses are preparing for winter. Herbicides appear to be more effective when used in a fall application.

If you live in the foothills or mountains or know someone who does, please encourage them to do fire mitigation around their property. Colorado State University through the Colorado State Forest Service has information and can assist property owners in preparing for wildfires. Please keep those affected by the Four Mile and Reservoir fires in your thoughts and prayers.

Sharon Bokan

Small Acreage Coordinator

SAM Newsletters Online

View previous newsletters via the SAM link above.

SAM Email Listserv

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time and are not subscribed to the boco_small_acreage@colostate.edu listserv, you may request subscription on the SAM website (linked in header above). This quarterly e-newsletter and other timely info will be distributed via this email listserv.

Subscribers may use the listserv also as a SAM info gathering mechanism. For example, you may inquire about who is available in the area supply hay, to perform swathing/baling, etc. The listserv is not a marketplace, however. Because it is hosted on the CSU server, **NO COMMERCIAL EMAILS ARE ALLOWED. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SELL ANYTHING VIA THE LISTSERV – THANKS.** Use the newsletter ad section for these purposes.

Currently, there are 200 subscribers to the listserv

Want to Hire Someone to Spray Your Weeds? Things You Should Know.

Deniece Hopkins, SAM Volunteer

If you are like me, you've grown tired of fighting the ever-growing populations of weeds around your home and pasture. Figuring out what herbicide to use on what weed; can it be used around water, animals, etc. Then there's calibrating the sprayer and figuring the correct amounts to mix, how fast you'll have to travel to apply the correct amount. All this can become quite tedious.

This year, I decided to leave the worry and frustrations to the professionals, and in doing this, I learned some important tips; I thought I'd pass on to you.

Before you run off and hire Joe's Fly by Night Weed Killers, inc., make sure that old Joe is licensed and insured. There are many things that could go wrong with weed spraying and you don't want to be liable for your neighbor's orchard being killed from the spray drifting. Yes, there are many weed sprayers out there that are not licensed, so be careful. Insurance understandably is very expensive for an applicator and any real applicator should have liability insurance and workman's comp to protect you. You should ask to get a copy of their insurance certification.

In order to get a pesticide applicators license, you must pass a few tests, given by the State that determines if you fully understand the laws and how to's of pesticide application. There is a great deal one must know to become an applicator. If you're having your pasture done, the licensed applicator must have a license that allows them to spray pasture. In Colorado they would need the license for Rangeland Pest Control and Agricultural Weed Control. Your regular lawn guy probably doesn't have this since their license would be Turf Pest Control. So you've decided on a licensed and insured applicator and you are going to give them a call and have them come out next Tuesday at noon while you are home on your lunch hour to have your weeds sprayed. Unfortunately, pesticide applicators generally don't make appointments.

When he sprays cannot be determined by what is convenient for you, but by the weather conditions. Temperature, wind, rain, and future forecast, all come into play when deciding when to spray.

The best thing to do is have your applicator out to look over your place and give you a bid. At that time, you can ask him to call you when he plans on applying the pesticide.

Be sure to ask:

How long do people and/or animals need to stay off the area?

How long will it take to kill the weeds?

When can you apply water?

Do you need to mow prior to spraying?

What you need to do to revegetate the area?

If there is anything else you need to know.

And any other questions that you might want to know, depending on your circumstances.

Be sure you point out any areas you want him to avoid, like your garden area or around livestock housing. You might also point out any plants you don't want killed and any new seeding within the last year or so.

You may need to have the area mowed prior to spraying. This will allow the spray to get to all the weeds and not just the tall ones.

The next thing you need to do is be patient.

Weeds could take several weeks to die. Don't get frustrated that they aren't dying right away.

However, it is possible that you will need to spray more than once to get control of the weeds, possibly Spring and Fall to catch the different kinds of weeds in their growing seasons.

Once you've gotten control of the weeds and if you are spraying large areas of weeds in your pasture, you will probably need a plan for revegetating the area. If you kill lots of weeds and just leave the ground bare, the weeds will just come back. You will probably need to reseed with desirable grasses in place of the weeds to keep them choked out. However there might still be enough grass in the area that just removing the competition from the weeds might be all you need. Be sure to get your applicators advice.

If you have further questions about weed spraying or still want to do it yourself, your local

CSU Extension office has a great deal of information online or feel free to call.

Yellow Sweet Clover

Sharon Bokan, Small Acreage Coordinator

With the moisture we had this spring, there is an obvious abundance of Yellow sweet clover (*Melilotus officinalis*). The spring moisture not only encouraged more seed to germinate but also larger plants than in dry years. Yellow sweet clover is considered to be a biennial (2 year life cycle) but can also act as an annual. Yellow sweet clover was brought to the United States in the 1600's for forage and honey bees. Beekeepers love yellow sweet clover for their bees.

Yellow sweet clover can be used as forage but it does not make great forage. It tends to be rougher and coarser than most animals prefer. It also has a bitter taste due to the coumarin in it. Livestock can get accustomed to the taste if fed Yellow sweet clover often. It is a great nitrogen fixer for other crops. Controlled burns actually encourage the growth of it by scarifying the seeds and encouraging seed germination. There is one problem with baled yellow sweet clover by itself or mixed in with other forage. It can be toxic to animals. If the hay is not properly dried, several different fungi can attach to the yellow sweet clover and convert the coumarin in the plant to dicoumarol, an anticoagulant. The dicoumarol interferes with the production of vitamin K, which aids in blood clotting. Moldy hay containing yellow sweet clover can cause animals to appear weak and depressed, have subcutaneous swellings, bleeding from the nose and other health problems up to and including death. Cattle are most often affected by the dicoumarol but it can also affect horses and other livestock. Sheep appear to be resistant to the dicoumarol. The larger the bale, the higher likelihood that the moisture content is high enough to promote mold growth. If you have some hay in question, it is best to have it tested for dicoumarol prior to feeding any livestock.

There are treatments available that include transfusions and vitamin K injections should an animal exhibit symptoms. It is never recommended to feed animals moldy hay. However, if you must, talk to your veterinarian about specific recommendations for your animals should you choose to feed your animals hay with potentially moldy Yellow sweet clover in it. Guidelines for feeding with moldy sweet clover containing hay are as follows. The moldy hay should not comprise more than 25% of the animals diet. Dilute the infected hay with clean dry hay to reduce potential problems. Do not feed the hay to animals that will be giving birth or having any kind of surgery, for example dehorning, castration, for at least 3 weeks. So while the beekeepers may be happy to see the Yellow sweet clover, livestock owners need to beware. Know the source of your hay or have it tested prior to feeding your animals to be on the safe side if you suspect that moldy Yellow sweet clover may be a problem.

Backyard Chickens

Jennifer Cook, Regional Small Acreage Coordinator

Raising backyard chickens can provide you with fresh eggs, pest control, and hours of entertainment. It may even save you some money. But before you get started, it is important to learn about what chickens need to be healthy and happy. First step, make sure your local municipality allows you to have chickens! I visited with Greg and Patty Michaud for an afternoon on their small acreage in Laporte, CO to learn more about raising chickens. Greg and Patty produce organic and conventional eggs and raise pullets (young female chickens). They also run a small feed store. They convinced me that keeping a small flock of hens can be easy. Hens are productive egg layers for two to four years depending on the breed. Expect one egg every day or two per chicken for the first two years, and realize that egg production will decrease during the winter. Roosters are not necessary unless you want the eggs to be fertile. Greg told me the trick to having consistent egg

layers is simply meeting their food, water, and shelter needs.

Food and Water

Chickens need constant food and water supply. Water must be under 80 degrees Fahrenheit and not frozen solid. Provide a free choice supply of complete LAYER feed, which will have extra calcium, 16-18% protein, and essential amino acids/vitamins/minerals. Also feed ground oyster shells or ground eggshells for calcium if needed. Chickens are great nutrient cyclers. They will eat kitchen scraps like veggies, fruit, meat, bones, and dairy. They love grass clippings, bugs, seeds, worms, and weeds. During cold weather, provide extra energy with “hen scratch” such as corn or soy grains. Flax seed will provide omega-3’s when greens are not available. Alfalfa hay can also be fed. Chickens have gizzards, which are like secondary stomachs that help them grind their food before digestion. This process requires chickens to swallow gritty substances like gravel. If chickens do not have access to gravel in the chicken run, you can purchase “grit.”



Use a heated base to keep water from freezing in the winter.

Sunlight and Soil

Access to outdoors is essential for healthy chickens. Install chicken fence around your property and let the chickens “free range” a few hours every day. If needed, clip their wings to keep them from escaping. In the chicken run and coop area, shoot for at least 10 square feet per chicken and make sure there is soil because chickens like to take dirt baths to deter mites. When it snows, it’s good to shovel the runs because chickens don’t like to walk in the snow.

The Coop

Coops need to protect chickens from heat, sun, wind, extreme cold, and predators. Use lots of high carbon litter like wood shavings, tree leaves and straw as bedding. The coop should provide a place for the chickens to lay eggs and a place to roost.

Wild chickens roost in trees at night. To simulate tree limbs, build roosting bars as high as practical and accessible in the coop. Chickens are very docile and vulnerable at night. Make sure predators like raccoon, fox, mountain lion, skunk, hawk, and coyote, are closed out. Farm cats can stay in the coop at night to hunt mice. Nesting boxes should not be directly under the roosting area because chickens poop a lot at night. Greg recommends building the boxes 12” X 12” X 18” tall with a 6” tall front to hold straw. Plan on one box per four or five birds. Keep the boxes cleaned daily so your eggs will be clean.

Greg’s nesting box



Other Considerations

Labor – daily egg collection and feeding.

Smells – use high carbon litter to reduce manure smells. Greg and Patty use the litter from the coop as compost in their garden.

Noise – hens make some noise when they lay an egg. Roosters crow every morning. Tell your neighbors in advance if you expect noisy chickens.

Pathogens and Diseases – not much in a small flock. Don’t kiss the birds, and wash your hands and equipment.

Disposal – How will you manage the older chickens, which are no longer laying eggs?

Keep them, eat them, euthanize them according to local regulations, or donate to animal rescue operations such as the Raptor Rehabilitation Center.

For more information:

Chickens in Your Backyard, A Beginner's Guide
by Rick and Gail Luttmann

CSU Extension factsheet, "Home-Produced Chicken Eggs"

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09377.html>

CSU Veterinary Extension: Avian webpage

<http://veterinaryextension.colostate.edu/menu2/avian.shtml>

Pasture grasses

Sharon Bokan, Small Acreage Coordinator

Are you thinking about reseeding or overseeding your pasture this fall? Are you confused about what grass to use? Here is a little bit of information about some common pasture grasses to help you decide. The three local seed companies are also reliable sources for help with your selection.

First a couple of definitions.

Cool season grasses have two growth times. The first growth time is the spring and in normal years is greater than the second, which occurs in the fall. They grow when temperatures are cooler. They tend to have a higher percent crude protein and break down quicker in the digestive system due to thinner cell walls. Warm season grasses have only one growth time and that is in the heat of summer. Warm season grasses tend to produce more bulk but are of lower feed quality than cool season grasses. Warm season grasses also tend to utilize the water they receive more efficiently. They also tend to be lower in protein but animals can use the protein more efficiently.

Sod forming grasses produce a Kentucky bluegrass type pasture. Bunch grasses grow as separate bunch plants that usually have space (bare ground) between each plant.

Cool season grasses

Smooth Brome

Introduced, sod forming. It is highly palatable with high protein, moderately tolerant of low grazing, requires a minimum of 12" precipitation but prefers irrigation and can be invasive or sod bound (becomes overcrowded).

Orchardgrass

Introduced, bunch grass. It is highly palatable with 3-4% winter protein, but cannot tolerate close grazing (you must leave 6-10" of growth), requires 15" of precipitation or irrigation and does not tolerate dry, cold winters.

Timothy

Introduced, bunch grass. A short-lived, highly palatable grass that holds the protein level well, moderately tolerant to low grazing but prefers richer soil and moist bottomlands with 16" precipitation minimum.

Western wheatgrass

Native, sod forming. A palatable grass that has highest protein levels in the spring is grazing resistant and very drought and cold tolerant needing 10-14" precipitation.

Crested wheatgrass

Introduced, bunch grass. Crested wheatgrass is highly palatable in the spring and fall with up to 18% protein in the spring, tolerates low grazing, requires 10" precipitation, is winter hardy and must be kept grazed or mowed for palatability.

Meadow brome

Introduced, bunchy sod former. A highly palatable grass that has moderate protein levels, is moderately tolerate to overgrazing and has moderate drought resistance requiring 14-16" precipitation.

Other wheatgrasses



R.L. Hamblen, Bugwood.org

Tall Introduced, bunch grass; Intermediate Introduced, sod former; Pubescent Native, sod former; Slender Native, bunch grass
These are all palatable and nutritious grasses that are moderately tolerant to low grazing and drought, requiring 11-24" of precipitation.

Warm season grasses

Sideoats grama

Native, bunchy sod former. A highly palatable grass that is not greatly resistant to overgrazing stays green longer than most warm season grasses and can therefore be grazed longer.



Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Blue grama

Native, bunchy sod former. A nutritious and palatable grass for livestock, its highest quality occurs when it is green but it retains its nutrition level when dry making it good fall and winter grazing, withstands grazing well, it is not suitable for hay production and is very drought tolerant.

Buffalo grass

Native, sod former. A very palatable grass that can withstand heavy grazing, in fact it can increase with grazing, however it produces low quantities of forage but is very drought tolerant.

Switch grass

Native, sod former. Switchgrass is not as palatable as other grasses but does produce good quality hay if cut before maturity, holds its nutrient value well, as the season progresses raise the grazing level to protect the plants, is winter hardy and needs 16-18" precipitation.

Prior to doing any planting it is always a good idea to get a soil test so you know what species would be good for your area. The type of grass

you may want for your pasture may not be appropriate for you soils, elevation, site and needs. Also consider the type of livestock you will have grazing and their actual nutritional needs. Consider whether you will be using the grass for hay production or grazing. Your local Extension or NRCS office, Co-op or seed company can help you with your selection.

References:

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/factSheet>
Guide to Grasses, Pawnee Buttes Seed Company, Third edition, January 2008

Place your SAM related classified ad or print advertisement here!

Classified Advertising Rates are as follows:

SAM Volunteer: 20 cents/word
4-H Member/Leader: 20 cents/word
General Public, Individual: 25 cents/word
General Public, Business/Show: 30 cents/ word

Print Ad Rates are as follows:

Quarter Page Ad: \$50.00
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Full Page Ad: \$100.00

Email Sharon Bokan for more details

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Port-A-Hut \$75
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