

# Weekly Article

4-20-2021

## Look Out for Toxic Weeds

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of Agriculture. As we enter the latter half of April, below normal temps and wet conditions seem to be the theme for southern Ohio. This past week I had the opportunity to help plant the Ohio State forage plots at the farm science review and saw a few fields that have been planted, tillage, fertilizer applications, and herbicide applications. I was quite surprised to see how dry the soils were compared to our soils. With the chance of mixed snow and rain in the forecast for Wednesday I think most farmers would agree the seed is probably safer in the bag than in the ground at this point. The soil is warming but cold rain can cause young seedlings to go into shock when imbibition occurs. On the other hand, this cool and wet cycle we are in right now is great for our cool season forage stands and pastures, unfortunately the cool season growth of annual, perennial, and biannual weeds in our pastures and hay fields.

Today I want to discuss a few weed species that can present big problems in our grazing operations. First and foremost, we need to give our livestock more credit about being smart and healthy eaters. Just as we humans like to consume things that are not the best for us, livestock will also. Poisoning can happen in several ways but the most common is by starvation, accidental grazing, and environmental issues. As pasture managers we must strive to prevent toxic plant growth from occurring and maintain a health forage stand throughout the grazing season. Some plants that can be toxic spring growing plants that you need to keep an eye out on and kill or remove are:

1. Wild Black Cherry – This is a common tree found growing in pasture fence lines, wood lines, and creek beds. The leaves of the trees are soft and sweet during early spring making it appealing to livestock. When Wild Cherry is stress or injured, the foliage can release (hydrocyanic acid) or often referred to as prussic acid. Other weed species that have the same toxic properties are, hemp dogbane, common milkweed, elderberry, horse nettle, and black nightshade.
2. Poison Hemlock- a common biannual found growing along the edges of pastures and hay fields, this weed produces deadly Alkaloids. In most cases Poison Hemlock is rarely consumed by livestock due to its foul odor and unpleasant taste. Most poisoning occurs due to accidental consumption during grazing and hay consumption.

3. St John's Wort – This weed has photodynamic properties making animal with sensitive white skin severely irritated by bright sunlight. This often occurs in light skinned goats and sheep. Other common forage species like Alsike Clover, and buckwheat can also be photodynamic.
4. Yellow buttercup- This yellow flowered, low growing, and easily spreading weed can be accidentally consumed by livestock. Irritation to the intestine, blistering of the mouth, tongue, and skin can occur. The toxin will dissipate if cut and dried in hay production.
5. Velvet grass- This is a grassy weed that I have seen more and more of the last few years, commonly found in wet areas or poorly drained hay fields. This weed has cyanogenetic properties that can pose a prussic acid poisoning effect under certain growing conditions such as drought or frosting.

Some other details to go over:

- USDA FSA will open a sign-up period for CFAP #2 Assistance program for Livestock, row crop, and specialty crop producers effected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Call (937) 544 -2033 for assistance.
- CRP Grasslands signup will begin March 15<sup>th</sup>,2021 and conclude April 23<sup>rd</sup>,2021 contact the farm service agency for assistance in signing up for these programs.
- April 28<sup>th</sup> Local Jobs Fair 12:00pm to 5:00 pm, located at 600-day road, Mt Orab, Ohio
- July 15<sup>th</sup> is the set deadline to report acreage planted to spring crops such as corn, soybeans, oats, alfalfa, tomatoes, potatoes and more. Contact the FSA Office to report once crops are planted.

From the field

- Soil temperatures are hovering around 53° F
- Watch for creeping yellow buttercup in pastures.
- Cover crops are growing fast, think about termination steps in the coming weeks ahead
- Reports of back cutworm moths in northern and western portion of the state.
- Winter Annuals are slowing down in growth and making seed.
- Greenhouse vegetables and flowers are exploding with growth and ahead of schedule.
- Cool Season Forage seeding are starting to emerge.
- Alfalfa Weevil have begun to spread keep an eye on your young alfalfa crop.