

Weed of The Week

Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)

Common chickweed is a winter annual weed that can be a concern for grain crops, hay fields, vegetable gardens, and turfgrass. Common chickweed flowers are white with 5 deeply lobed petals, appearing as 10. The stem is hairless on common chickweed, but on other varieties it is hairy. Common chickweed primarily emerges in the fall. This weed then becomes dormant over winter before setting seed in the spring to early summer then it dies. It can flower within a month of growth and set seed within 2 to 3 months. A single chickweed plant averages 25,000 seeds. Chickweed seeds are a preferred snack for chickens and other birds. Common chickweed tends to have a low-growing habit and spreads easily, making it appear in dense patches. Common chickweed grows anywhere from 4 to 20 inches high and 4 to 12 inches wide. The root system is shallow and fibrous which allows chickweed to be easily pulled by hand or weeded mechanically, especially before it is fully mature.

Common chickweed is highly competitive with small grains. It is an efficient nitrogen scavenger. It thrives in conditions with high nitrogen. Mechanical control includes medium to deep tillage as this weed is adapted to no-till production. It becomes more difficult to control when plants become larger and form a dense vegetative mat. It is best to control chickweed in the fall or very early spring. In cool-season lawns, effective pre-emergent herbicides include isoxaben (Gallery), pendimethalin (Pendulum) or oxadiazon (Ronstar). Post-emergence, carefully directed application of herbicides such as Finesse, Olympus, or Orion are effective. Look for a product with one or more of the following active ingredients: 2, 4-D, MCPP (mecoprop), Dicamba*, or Triclopyr.

