

Weed of The Week

Horsenettle

This weed can be a thorn in a farmer's side when present in pastures or crop fields. This week the weed of the week is Horsenettle. This weed is in the nightshade family making it a possible poisonous weed to livestock. Horsenettle is found throughout all Ohio, but it likes sandy and gravelly soils. This weed is a perennial with rhizome spreading roots making it a challenge to control with mechanical tools. Horsenettle has stems and leaves covered with prickly spines and produces a purple/lavender flower with a yellow fruit very similar to a cherry tomato in size. When leaves are crushed the plant will emit a potato like odor. The root system of this plant can go as deep as 10 feet making it drought resistant and a challenge to control. Horsenettle can be toxic to cattle, sheep, and goats if ingested in large quantities. The drying process of making hay does not limit the amount of Alkaloid poison in the plant. Death in livestock usually is not an issue to the plant being very unpalatable to livestock. Controlling the Horsenettle should be a top priority in pastures and hayfields. One of the most effective ways in controlling horse nettle is good pasture management. Maintaining a grazing height of 4-5 inches minimum will allow valuable forage species to out compete. Maintaining nutrients in the pasture is critical to most weeds like poor acidic soil. Herbicides like 2-4-D, chaparral, and Cimarron Max are very effective. If any of these products are used, do not graze livestock within 7 days of application.

