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Sound Too Good to be True?

If you've ever been flipping through ag industry publication or scrolling on social media, or sorting through your e-mail inbox, you've come across all kinds of ads. Some catch your attention and get a second look. Maybe there's a deal to be had or something new about a product you're interested in. Some sound almost too good to be true, and while they might be worth a second look, they might also be worth a little research.

I recently noted an advertisement for a product making some interesting claims about a grassy weed I have great disdain for: Broomsedge Bluestem. Since I have yet to find a silver bullet for combatting this weed, I was hopeful maybe this was it. A second look, however, affirmed the little voice in the back of my head whispering 'that's too good to be true'.

If you ever hear that voice, it's never a bad thing to take a second look. In the case of this product, the ad claimed you could replace one nutrient with this product – at a fraction of the cost. That really does sound good – but how do you know for sure? I would suggest a four-step process, taking a look at product testimonials, field research/strip trials, agronomic consistency, and unbiased research from University/Extension trials when available.

In the case of this product, the testimonials were good – but some were almost *too* good. Still, it was worth a second look.

The farmer research trials and soil test results were interesting. If they were well conducted and accurate, they would support the product as having a lot of promise.

There were even University research trials – three in fact. Some were a little vague, however, and that's where agronomic consistency concerns took over.

In this case, the product claim wasn't consistent with what that nutrient would actually provide to the soil, particularly at the levels claimed. A little more digging revealed that the research results weren't readily available – another red flag. It was enough to require a little more research, in this case for research on the product that wasn't referenced in the ad. When that was done, the product wasn't found to be nearly as effective as first referenced.

Does that mean new products shouldn't be tried? Absolutely not. A trial with a new product is what often leads to more research. Give a new product a shot, but you might want to limit the size of the area you try it on until additional supporting work can be conducted.

If you are looking at a new product, and want to know what research might be available, drop me a line. If we can find something to provide additional information to help you make your decision, we're happy to do so.

NOTE: for more information on this product trial, check out my Agronomy blog at: <https://blogs.k-state.edu/meadowlarkagronomy/>.