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‘Other’ Brush Control Options

Basal bark and cut stump treatment options have been the focus in this space the last two weeks. Both provide options for ‘extending’ our brush control window once foliar application windows have closed. Two other chemical methods to consider are also options. Girdling - making a cut an inch or two deep around the tree’s circumference – can kill larger trees, but resprout prevention is optimized when a herbicide is applied to the girdled area. Soil treatment herbicides in various forms can provide brush control as they soak into the soil surface and are absorbed by roots, stolons, or rhizomes, killing the plant.

All these chemical options can be effective, but almost all are enhanced using an integrated brush management strategy as well. An integrated approach is simply tying together multiple strategies with the goal of making the sum of the approaches greater than the individual ones. Prescribed burning and stocking rate management are two such strategies.

Prescribed fire has long been utilized in rangelands as a low-cost way to control woody species after establishment. It’s not as easy as lighting a fire and putting it out when it’s done, however. Advance planning requires an evaluation of species to control and the grass species you are burning (warm season grasses respond better than cool season species and any fire is going to require adequate an adequate fuel load at the right time) as well as your ability to safely conduct the fire. Simply burning a brush species doesn’t necessarily kill it. Fire timing is also important. Planning for prescribed fire next season starts now with work to mow/manage fire breaks and forage management to leave plenty of forage for the upcoming fire.

Stocking rate management is one of the best brush control methods available. A properly stocked pasture results in dense stands that can help prevent brush from getting a start. A lot of factors affect our ability to stock appropriately. Now is a good time for a last look at pastures to see how they responded to our grazing management. Use the dormant season to further analyze stock rates to ensure you grazing plan matches what pastures are providing.

Brush control is a major problem in eastern Kansas. In most cases, it didn’t show up overnight – and it’s not going away overnight, either. Start planning now to implement an integrated approach with the goal of maintaining – and even recouping – valuable grazing acres. Drop me a line if you want to discuss some of these options further.