

# Marestail Control

*Specialist Offers  
Control Option For  
Marestail, Horseweed*

PRINCETON, KY.

**M**arestail, or horseweed, continues to be one of the more troublesome weeds in Kentucky, and Dr. J.D. Green, University of Kentucky weed scientist, addressed the topic with growers recently.

"Our best opportunity to deal with marestail in soybeans is by managing or controlling the plant before or at planting time, because after the crop emerges our options for treatment decline considerably," he said.

Most marestail control programs are based around herbicide treatment at or before planting time to minimize the impact of the plant throughout the crop growing season.

"Our foundation treatment or recommendation continues to be the use of 2,4-D tank mixed with a glyphosate product up front," Green recommended. "However, we need to be sure we are using the appropriate rates to get the control we need depending on the growth stage and the ages of marestail and other weeds at the time of treatment."

Occasionally, control can be less than optimum which could be due to weed resistance, but environmental conditions or lower herbicide rates can also contribute to failures.

"Of course, one of the current disadvantages of using 2,4-D in soybeans is that we should wait anywhere from 7 to 30 days before planting the crop," he cautioned. "That increases our timing for getting the crop planted when we go the 2,4-D route. We also must be concerned about adjacent sensitive crops, which might be growing nearby."

A couple of other herbicide programs are also available for burndown control of marestail before planting. One is based on the Kixor technology, basically products like Sharpen and Verdict.

"We can use these herbicides for burndown activity on small marestail. Since they rely somewhat on contact type activity to be effective we may need to increase spray volumes a little higher to get good spray coverage.

"We should also pay attention to our overall weed management needs and keep in mind that products like Sharpen may not give us the full spectrum of weed control desired; we still may need to add glyphosate or tank mix with other products to achieve complete control of existing weeds with our burndown program."

Another option available now is the use of Ignite. When Ignite is applied as a burndown treatment before planting, it is not always necessary to plant a LibertyLink soybean variety. However, with Ignite it's important to use the appropriate spray volumes to get good spray coverage. Higher application rates may be needed, depending upon the size and age of the marestail at time of treatment.

In addition to burndown treatment options, some soil-applied herbicides can aid in the

**Dr. J.D. Green, University of Kentucky weed scientist, addressed the topic of marestail, or horseweed, which continues to be one of the more troublesome weeds in Kentucky.**

Photo by John LaRose, Jr.



control of smaller marestail plants that have already emerged, as well as provide residual activity. These include products that contain flumioxazin or sulfentrazone combined with chlorimuron or cloransulam such as Valor XLT, Authority XL, Authority First, Envive, Sonic, and Gangster. These particular herbicide products along with a few others can be applied at the beginning of the season for initial weed control as well as provide residual control for marestail and other weeds.

"Marestail thrives in a no-till or conservation tillage environment," he reminded. "Marestail is a plant that is a common weed across the whole state. I won't say it's 100 percent in all of the fields but it's in the high 80 percent to 90 percent range or more. Certainly when we don't control it for one season then it's even more of a problem the next year.

"Another feature about marestail that I think we need to better understand is it's biology and it's growth period. It's an annual plant but it's hard to classify it as a true summer annual versus a winter annual because new plants can germinate either in the fall or the early spring as well as throughout the season to a certain extent. So that characteristic in itself, and the fact that it is a prolific seed producer and the seed can be windborne for dispersal, makes it a perfect plant to continue to be a problem for us in the future. Now that we have biotypes that are resistant to glyphosate, that creates an additional challenge for dealing with this troublesome weed.

"Relative to the weed management programs that we've become accustomed to using for weeds such as marestail, we have to be looking at different opportunities, different management methods in order to break up the cycle instead of relying on one treatment option," he summed.  $\Delta$

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