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Got Grassburs in Your Pasture or Hayfield?

By Marty Morgan

Whatever you want to call them their Ugly! And unwanted! Cows will graze the fire out of them before they head out, but they WILL head out and that ends most grazing with the appearance of the ugly stickerbur! Then they get stuck in the cow's hair or tails and get transferred all over the ranch. But the cows are not the only ones to blame, there's the truck and equipment tires and all the animals toting them around. Then there are the sprigs or seeds used to establish pasture and unless we use certified seeds or sprigs then yep, we get some that way too. Then there is hay which can also contain and spread sandbur. Avoid feeding hay in your pasture that was produced in fields infested with sandbur. If buying hay, I recommended you go take a look at it and see for yourself if it has stickers. So, spreading them is just a natural and manmade occurrence and you can't stop it. It's going to happen, and they'll get slung everywhere on your property, even in Mama's nice lawn! We all hate them and want to eradicate the entire earth from every last one of them little devils. Most everyone knows there are chemicals out there we can use in our quest to eradicate. Yes, there is glyphosate that will knock em dead, but Mama might knock you dead if you kill her beautiful lawn! And we don't want to kill our warm season pasture grass that our cows graze on or that we hay! Now you can apply glyphosate right after you cut and bale your hay patch using a specified rate and window, so this is an option on hay fields. But it will more than likely also stunt your bermudagrass and may set it back for days. So, is it worth it? So how do we make a valiant effort to get rid of as many as possible and keep our pasture grasses producing? In a pasture situation the best treatment for grassburrs is a preemergent called Rezilon, which needs to be applied at least a couple weeks before green up. Usually, folks try to get it out anytime in Feb to mid-March while the grass is still in its dormant stage. Up until the summer of 2020 all we had was Prowl H2O, but now we have Rezilon and according to test trials it works excellent! The best results are obtained when you put out 3oz before green up(dormant) and another 3 oz after your first cutting of hay (whenever that is). A Lot of folks gave it a try this year and are happy with the results. Ok when it comes to post-emergent control, Pastora is the best option if you're talking about bermudagrass pastures and fields. You cannot use it on anything but bermudagrass so nope you can't use it on your native pastures. It needs to be applied about two-three weeks after green up usually sometime in April to May all depending on the weather conditions that year. Remember after the stickers head out, there is really nothing that works. Oh it might suppress them some but not worth the money and time at that stage. It wouldn't be fair if I left out two post emergent chemicals that have the active ingredient "Imazapic" sold under the trade names of Plateau and Panoramic 2SL. Folks don't use them much because they really burn and stunt your grass, up to 30 days sometimes, and who needs that! Its all about timing really, between the growth stage and weather conditions, and of course rates applied and how much product actually got on the stickers, which is why we need to graze or mow it short before applying a post emergent. Proper fertilization and stocking rate matter too and is considered cultural suppression if done right, but it's not going to rid you of grassburs. It could help you out in native pastures though. Get your pocketbook out cause it ain't cheap! The last thing I want to mention is using a prescribed burn to help control your stickers if executed at the right time and intensity. Burning may stimulate sandbur germination if it is not intense enough to kill the seed and the remaining soil cover is low. In this case, burning can increase herbicide efficacy because a high percentage of sandbur seeds will germinate and will be exposed to the applied herbicide. I believe burning does a world of good for several reasons of which one is stickerburs. So, use a pre-emergent every year, a post-emergent if needed or desired, adjust your stocking rate accordingly, fertilize right, and burn your pastures every three years or so, and maybe by the time you get so old you can't get around, they'll be gone! Or you'll be so old you won't even care anymore!