

Wheat, September 3, 2002

CONTROL DIFFICULT WHEAT WEEDS IN THE FALL (2002)

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It is time for the annual winter-wheat article. Every spring, the phone rings regarding cheat and ryegrass. Unfortunately, by then, it's basically too late to do anything. If you had cheat or rye problems last spring, NOW is the time to avoid them for next year.

The only herbicide we currently have for cheat is Sencor. Sencor has marginal crop safety and the label specifies that a Sencor-tolerant variety must be used. However, we routinely hear that the "official list of tolerant varieties" contains only outdated varieties. Because the crop safety margin is thin, the chance of a control failure is increased. As with all herbicides, Mother Nature often changes the rules. The best answer is to contact the Sencor representative for rate, safety and control advice.

Two herbicides are available for ryegrass: Hoelon and Achieve. These are both "grass-only" herbicides and are chemically similar to Fusilade and Select. Please note that the similarity does not include crop safety- Fusilade and Select are harmful to wheat. Hoelon may be used both PRE and postemergence, however the early postemergence rate is half of the preemergence rate so there's money to be saved by applying the Hoelon soon after the wheat is established. Check the ryegrass in your fields- the Hoelon rate depends upon the size of the ryegrass. Herbicide-resistant ryegrass is common in Arkansas so folks in Southern Missouri counties should keep their eyes open with these two herbicides.

Cheat and ryegrass concentrate on the edges of fields. Consequently it may be worthwhile to treat a swath or two around the edge and leave the remainder of the field untreated. Scouting, field notes and maps of weed patches from previous wheat crops are valuable in these instances.

Sencor, Hoelon and Achieve all allow spring application; however, the spring applications primarily have "revenge value". Control will be incomplete and competition damage has already occurred.

You may hear about fall applications of the herbicide Peak. Peak can provide good control of garlic and the normal junk broadleaf weeds. However, the label currently limits the planting of double crop soybeans. While there are stories of successful soybean crops in the Southern US, there have also been cases of Exceed (which contains Peak) hurting soybeans a full year after application in Missouri. This is one of those cases where the label restriction is due to a significant risk of injury.

With low prices, farmers are reluctant to treat for weeds. Winter annual weeds often cause significant yield reductions in no tillage, but rarely affect yields when they're disked under at planting. A burndown herbicide should be considered for no-till wheat.

There are a number of herbicides being developed for the wheat belt; however, at this time, none of them are really being targeted for the Mid South. Growers who know of cheat and or ryegrass infestations should consider fall treatments of Sencor, Hoelon or Achieve.