

HAPPENINGS

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Spring growth has begun for our forages, flowers and field crops. However, weeds also started to compete with our desired plants. In fact, as you're checking hay fields or just driving down the road you can see one of these competitive yellow weeds outgrowing everything else in the early spring. To some, it may just look like a yellow wildflower and for some it can serve as just that. The weed I am referring to in this case is Cressleaf Groundsel, also called Butterweed and commonly mistaken for Yellowrocker. Cressleaf Groundsel is a winter annual meaning it germinates in the fall and grows throughout the winter before giving us the colorful field of flowers we are seeing now. As you can tell by the attached picture, Butterweed has a flowerhead like a dandelion with 5-15 florets as it is a member of the daisy family. Cressleaf groundsel leaves are deeply lobed, and the stems are hairless and hollow. Yellowrocket is a member of the mustard family which helps with identification as it will only have four-petal flower head.

This is not a newly introduced weed and for the most part has not been much of a concern in the past as plants seemed to remain sparsely scattered throughout fields in southern Ohio. However, this weed seems to be showing up in higher populations in recent years and this is where the concern begins. As OSU Extension Educators, Jason Hartshuch and Ted Wiseman explain in our most recent C.O.R.N. Newsletter article, "Cressleaf Groundsel is toxic to both cattle and horses. Cattle are 30-40 times more susceptible to poisoning than sheep or goats. Calves and younger cattle are more susceptible than older cattle, but it can be fatal at high enough doses to all age groups. Pyrrolizidine alkaloids are the principle toxin in these plants. It is known to cause liver disease in cattle, producing symptoms such as listlessness, decreased appetite, depression, anorexia, diarrhea, and photosensitization in extreme cases. It also appears that this species has been responsible for abortions in cattle, making control of butterweed a necessity." While livestock will typically avoid consuming this plant, it is important to make sure adequate forage quantities are available to ensure livestock do not resort to the consumption of Cressleaf groundsel.

"While toxicity decreases in some plants as they dry, that is not the case with Cressleaf Groundsel. These toxins are not decreased if the plants are dried and baled. Ensiling will

decrease the concentration of toxin but not eliminate them. Producers with high concentrations of Cressleaf Groundsel may be forced to bale first cutting and throw it away so that livestock are not poisoned. Areas of sparse concentration may be baled and fed cautiously, ideally alongside hay that is free from poisonous weeds. Cattle may sort the weeds out. A new bale should be fed before the only thing left in the feeder is weeds. In grazing situations, cattle will usually not eat poisonous plants as long as they have access to other quality forages. Be cautious anytime drought conditions decrease forage stands.

Cressleaf groundsel normally does not regrow after the first cutting of hay; however, our goal should be to prevent it from becoming established in the field. Effective chemical control is when the plants are still in the rosette growth stage in late fall or early spring. Herbicides such as 2,4-D provide good control when applied at the correct growth stage. Larger plants may require additional herbicides such as dicamba. Products that can be used to control this weed and others can be found in the 2020 Weed Control Guide for Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. One caution using these broadleaf herbicides is that they also damage legumes such as alfalfa and clovers in pastures and hayfields." You can also find more information at agcrops.osu.edu and selecting the "C.O.R.N. Newsletter" tab at the top of the page.