

Best Management Practices: Broomsedge Control in Native Forage Plantings

Broomsedge bluestem (*Andropogon virginicus*) is a valuable plant for wildlife such as bobwhite quail, grassland songbirds and even native pollinators.

Broomsedge can also be a valuable forage in a regenerative grazing operation, which keeps it in a more palatable stage of growth. However, broomsedge is not typically welcome in a traditional native warm-season grass planting that might be in a simple grazing rotation with tall fescue or used for hay. In this scenario it may have matured enough by the time livestock are rotated into the native forage that it is unpalatable.

You can find information to help you identify broomsedge here: [Know the Difference between Broomsedge and Little Bluestem](#)

If you are aware that a pasture being converted to native forages already contains broomsedge, it is best to control it with herbicides to the extent possible with late summer or early fall applications that contain glyphosate herbicide. The application must be done prior to broomsedge going dormant for the winter. If you are planting your new seeding in May, consider making multiple applications of glyphosate to control any escaped broomsedge plants or seedlings as they green up or emerge from late March until planting.

If you are noticing broomsedge show up after your conversion to native forages, then you will have to use methods other than herbicide to control it. Broomsedge is a result of poor fertility and sparse vegetation in a pasture or hayfield. It took many years to get established and it will take at least a couple years to knock it back. No one practice recommended will get the results you desire, the best results come from using combination of the following:

Fertilization : Many times bringing fertility of the planted field up to soil test recommendations will reduce broomsedge density. Phosphorus and lime applications according to soil test recommendations offer the best results as shown through trials conducted by the University of Missouri.

Prescribed Burning: Prescribed burning alone will **NOT** control broomsedge. However, when burns occur in April when the desired native grasses have at least one inch of new growth, it will promote increased growth and tillering in species like big bluestem and



indiangrass. This will help crowd out broomsedge over time. Burns should be done frequently but should not occur in most new stands until after the second growing season following planting.

Grazing Management: Broomsedge remains green at the very base throughout most of the winter and tends to green up in the spring prior to the emergence of the other native grasses that you planted. Late winter and early spring grazing of broomsedge, before the emergence of the planted native grasses will help set the broomsedge back. After spring grazing of broomsedge, cattle should be removed from the native grass pasture prior to greenup of the desired species and remain away until the planted native grasses are ready to be grazed. This allows the planted native grasses to compete with the broomsedge and crowd it out. You may need to use temporary fencing to concentrate higher densities of livestock where the broomsedge density is highest.

These methods will work in a high diversity native forage planting that contains native forbs and native cool-season grasses. Once the broomsedge is under control, the recommended rotation should be followed. However, these practices should not be attempted on a native prairie remnant as it could impact plant diversity, especially impacting the more conservative forb/wildflower species.