



Beef Roundup



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TULARE COUNTY WEED MANAGEMENT AREA Yellow Starthistle Control Program

The Tulare County Weed Management Area (TCWMA) will treat small infestations with Milestone, a highly effective and selective herbicide that has proven to be effective for the control of Yellow Starthistle. The WMA is charging \$50 for the first 1 to 3 acres and \$15 per acre for more than 3 acres. To make arrangements call UC Cooperative Extension at 685-3303, 8 am to 5 pm Monday thru Friday. After business hours you may leave a message at 685-3309 x 236, and you will be called back. For more information contact Jim Sullins at 685-3303. Please indicate you are calling about Yellow Starthistle control. This program will be in effect through April, 2009.

The priority for this project is for small infestations, less than 10 acres.

The TCWMA is an organization of cooperating agencies that has been formed to reduce the increasing populations of noxious weeds in Tulare County.

YELLOW STARTHISTLE

Yellow starthistle (YST), a native to Eurasia, was introduced to California around 1850 via South America. It is now common in open areas on roadsides, rangelands, wildlands, hay fields, pastures, and waste areas. Recent reports indicate that Yellow starthistle infests between 10 and 15 million acres in California.

It is a gray-green to blue-green plant with a deep, vigorous taproot. It produces bright, thistle like yellow flowers with sharp spines surrounding the base. Yellow starthistle grows to heights varying from 6 inches to 5 feet. It often forms dense infestations and rapidly depletes soil moisture, thus preventing the establishment of other plants. Infestations may be so dense that the land is lost to grazing, habitat for wildlife, and recreation. Many small acreage land owners are unable to control Yellow starthistle.

Background

Some noxious weeds have a greater impact on our rangelands than others. For example, Yellow starthistle (YST) in many instances will take over large areas, reducing valuable forage to almost nothing and when mature, YST can even make it very difficult for livestock to travel through, let alone graze. In 1995 it was estimated that California had 12 million infested acres and in Tulare County it was estimated we had 20,000 acres. From 2002 to 2008, six out of seven years the Tulare County Weed Management Area has had a cost share program to control YST, and during that time we have successfully treated 209 properties for a total of 1220 acres. At the same time many ranchers have implemented their own successful ground and aerial control programs.

Speculating

What is it worth to you to control noxious weeds such as Yellow startistle? What is an acre of feed worth? As drought conditions continue, and there is no extra feed, the infested acre may be worth even more than on a good grass year.

There are a couple of ways to put a pencil to this. Let's look at some possible Tulare County scenarios with infestations so heavy it cannot be grazed:

- A. With a typical carrying capacity of 12 acres per cow, that means you are harvesting about 12,000 lbs of forage per cow at 1000 lbs per acre (an average cow-calf unit needs about 1000 lbs of air dry forage per month). If you had to replace that forage with Oat

hay at last year's price of \$120 per ton, that acre of forage was worth \$60. So if you can bring that infested acre back into grass production for less than \$60 acre you break even, and that does not even consider the following years benefit (note you will probably have to treat multiple years on heavily infested fields).

- B. If you were renting your ground, what is it worth? Using the same carrying capacity of 12 acres per cow, with the acre of ground providing 1000 lbs of forage and you are paying \$15 per acre rent. You may replace the forage with Oat hay at \$60 and with the rent of \$15 that acre has a cost of \$75 with no return, so bringing it back into production has a breakeven of \$75 per acre. Or you may write off that infested acre and rent another acre to offset the loss, which now is costing you \$30 plus whatever it takes to find additional acreages these days.
- C. What if that was really good ground, maybe some of your best ground at a carrying capacity of 6 acres per cow? That means each acre should produce an average of 2000 lbs forage, and it is going to take \$120 of Oat hay to replace it, and if you are renting at \$20 per acre, that acre of feed is now worth \$140. You could spend \$140 per acre and breakeven.

Ok, actually none of these scenarios probably apply to you. You probably do not have infestations that bad or you are grazing these infested acres early in the year and are only losing half of the grazing season, so you will need to do your own math to determine what your breakeven cost is to treat your noxious weeds.

In this process though there are additional considerations. That acre infestation is not sitting still, every year it will cover more ground, and some years it will take off and may even double in one year, so this year you may have one acre, and next year 1 ¼ acre, and the next 1 ½ acre, but the next could be 3 acres and if that doubles again you have 6 acres, and on good ground that may mean one less cow you can stock.

Conclusion:

From 1998 to 2008 we have conducted many trials for noxious weed control, measuring the efficacy of products on our most common noxious weeds, including Yellow starthistle, Milk Thistle, Italian Thistle, Tarweed, Fiddleneck, and others. Many products have given some control, however the two most promising at this point have been Transline and Milestone based on the breadth of their efficacy, the post and pre-emergent activity, and ease with which they may be used with grazing livestock in our range conditions.

Transline provides excellent control of YST with a very high level of selectivity. This means if you have a heavy YST infestation that you want to control and yet minimize the effect you may have on other preferred broadleaves such as Filaree, medics, or sub-clovers (which are valued components of our annual range) Transline may be your product of choice.

However, we have found that Milestone has some other advantages over Transline that should be considered. It has a broader spectrum of control, so if there are other noxious weeds besides YST in your infested ground Milestone will give better control. An example is the pre-emergent control of Fiddleneck, whereas with other products Fiddleneck often comes in to replace the YST. Milestone can be used much earlier in the year, giving an early release of grass species, increasing the grass competition with other broadleaves.

The control of invasive noxious weeds needs to be part of your management goals. It needs to be planned in advance and in your budget. You may not be able to afford not to participate in the WMA program at \$15 per acre.

The best window to treat YST and other noxious weeds is from mid-February to mid-April. The control is best and the opportunity for your forage to be competitive with the noxious weeds is optimal.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Beef Quality Assurance Program

March 20, 2009

Vet Med Teaching and Research Center

18830 Road 112, Tulare, CA 93274

9:30 am to 2:00 pm

9:30 am Registration

10:00 Beef Quality Assurance Program - *Dr. John Maas, James Oltjen, Steve Ipsen*

Noon Lunch

1:00 -2 pm Vaccination Site Demonstration - *Dr. Stuart Hall, Dr. John Maas, and Dr Mark Vanderlist*

MUST REGISTER FOR CERTIFICATION

Cost is \$25 per Ranch/Premise – Payable at the door

Fax registration to (559) 685-3319

Ranch Name _____

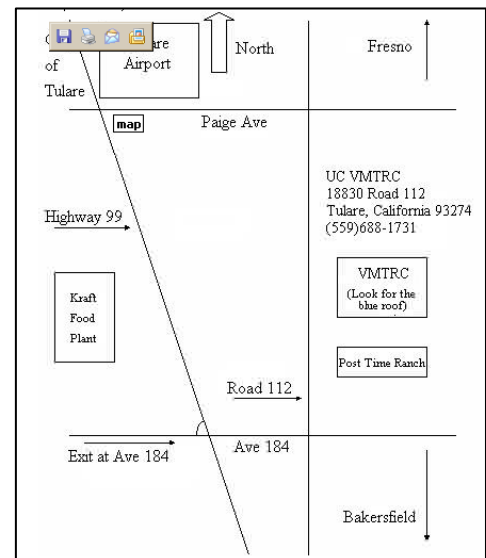
Address _____

Name Individual(s) _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

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February 2009



Jim Sullins
County Director

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