

Many producers may define a “weed” as “an undesirable plant”. However, Webster’s dictionary describes a weed as much more than simply “undesirable”. Webster defines a weed as “a plant that is not valued where it is growing and is usually of vigorous growth; especially: one that tends to overgrow or choke out more desirable plants”. This definition helps us recognize that when weeds take over a pasture we have more than just “undesirable plants” on our hands; we are dealing with profit-robbing plants that need to be removed. This week we will briefly evaluate some benefits of weed control, and how weeds affect cattle productivity.

Without proper control, weeds may become invasive, causing a decrease in yield and quality of desirable forages. They do this by stealing the nutrients and surface moisture intended for desirable plants, and uses them for themselves. This is especially noteworthy because forage quality has a direct correlation with forage intake, which then impacts cattle productivity. Consumption of high quality forage results in higher cow milkability, which increases her calf’s weaning weight. High quality forage may also decrease cow cost per year by reducing the amount of fertilizer that needs to be applied to maximize pasture health. Adequate weed control also encourages cows to graze more areas of a pasture because they will no longer be forced to graze around patches where weeds are prominent. This causes a more evenly grazed pasture, which promotes proper forage growth.

Weed control is a relatively simple management practice that can return great dividends in the future. Determining how much and what type of weed control product to use greatly depends on the maturity and type of the weeds. Local feed dealers and county extension agents are typically very good sources to use for information about weed control. For more information about controlling weeds in your pastures, or to be connected with a weed control expert, please contact us.