

News Column  
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## BAGWORM CONTROL

I'm in our backyard every day, at least twice a day tending to livestock, yet I was surprised when I spotted a brown cedar tree a couple of weeks ago. Ryan and I crossed paths that day as he was feeding pigs while I was feeding sheep and I said, "Look at this Ryan. I need to spray these trees."

If you know Ryan, you know he doesn't get excited until he gets excited – he's pretty laid back until the right buttons are pushed. He calmly and quietly replied, "What about these down here Dad? Are you going to spray them too?"

WHAT? I hadn't even noticed those trees! Ryan, how can you be so calm, and why didn't you point those trees out to me sooner? They're almost dead!

OK. They weren't almost dead. They would have lasted at least another week before all their needles were stripped. But they really did look awful! I had a mess.

The day I finally opened my eyes and saw my bagworm problem was a Tuesday. I immediately added spraying trees to my to-do list for the weekend. I shopped for insecticides at a big-box store on Wednesday, but all I spotted were watered down ready-to-use products. I probably didn't look close enough, and I am male – I didn't ask for help.

I ordered a gallon of malathion on Thursday morning, but that evening I looked at my trees again and decided I couldn't wait. I dug around in the garage and found a bottle of liquid Sevin I had purchased a couple of years ago, then I rounded up all the hoses I could find plus a

hose-end sprayer, and went to work on the sickliest looking trees.

On Friday I bought another hose.

Saturday morning I sprayed the whole windbreak, including the already-sprayed sickly trees. I wanted to be certain I had gotten insecticide on the worst looking trees even though I could already see dead bagworms and healthy new growth on the already-sprayed trees.

By the time I finished at 1:30 p.m. Saturday afternoon I was tired, hungry, and almost dehydrated because I wasn't smart enough to stop and get a drink. After showering and eating lunch, I still felt awful,... so I drove to town to get my second shingles shot. I figured I was done for the weekend, so I might as well add a little more pain.

For those of you who haven't had the shingles vaccine yet, I'm in the 60% or so who get a headache, body aches, and fever. No big deal though,.... I figured I'd be good to go by Monday morning, and I was!

Back to those bagworms. They WILL kill cedar trees if left uncontrolled. It will probably take a few years, but they will ruin a windbreak if left alone to do their thing. I didn't spray last year. Big mistake!

Any insecticide will do the job. The key to good bagworm control is thorough coverage. You need to get the insecticide on every bag. Don't just spray across the top and call it good.

The other key to successful bagworm control is proper timing. I have often told farmers that the middle of wheat harvest is the perfect time to spray. Most eggs will be hatched by mid-June, yet the worms will still be small enough to be easily killed. Waiting until mid-July, when the bags are 3/4 to one inch long is really too late. You'll do a better job by spraying earlier.

One application per year, in mid-June, is usually sufficient on farm windbreaks. However, homeowners might want to make a slightly earlier application, and then another

application in early July if they are intent on killing every single bagworm.

I sincerely hope your trees don't look like mine. If they do, it's time to get to work!

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmclure@ksu.edu).

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