

News Column

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## REMEMBER THE ROTARY HOE

My son asked me last week, while enjoying a rare family meal together, if he and his sisters were the only people who called me old. I thought for a bit, then replied that they probably weren't the only ones, although they were certainly the most frequent offenders.

Ryan is 13 and I am 57. I understand why he thinks I'm old. Shoot, for the first 30 minutes of each day (stiff neck, sore back, creaky joints), I even think I'm old!

When I recall changes in farming over my lifetime, I again think I'm old. One of my first tractor driving experiences was pulling a rotary hoe through a milo field to try to knock out small weeds that had emerged shortly after the milo. This was before we had most herbicides — 2,4-D was about our only chemical option and it was brutal on brace roots.

Young farmers today might not even recognize a rotary hoe if shown a picture, or if they stumbled over one in the weed patch back behind the barn. However, the rotary hoe provides a good lesson that we need to re-learn today.

A rotary hoe wouldn't take out big weeds. The only way a rotary hoe would work was if the weeds were really small.

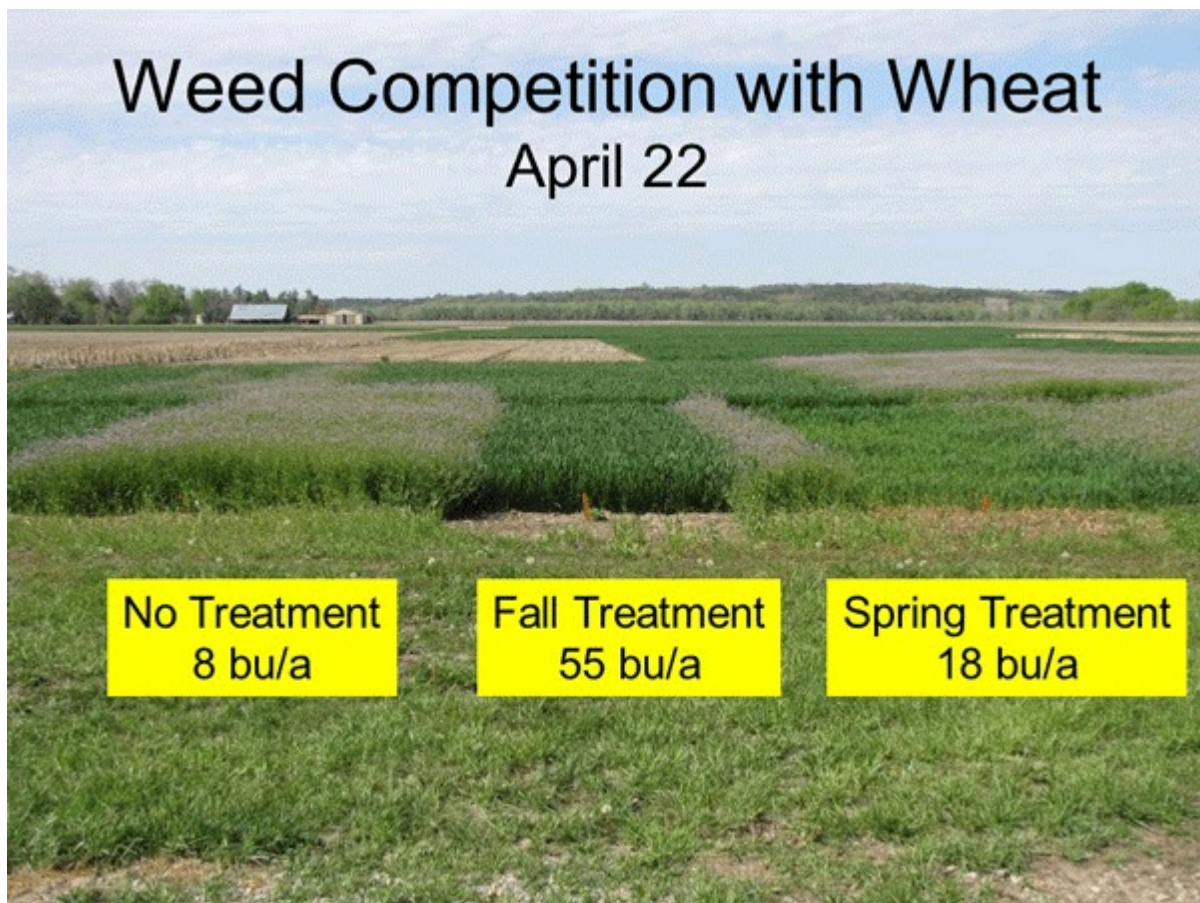
When we think about weed control with herbicides, we need to remember the rotary hoe. That rotary hoe could work wonders on small weeds, and the same principle applies with most herbicides. Catch the weeds when they are small and they will be relatively easy to control.

Mustards, marestail, and pigweed all come to mind. Thistles too. Henbit. Catch them

when they first emerge and chemical control will be easy. Wait for them to bolt and you probably won't get them all.

Now would be a good time to scout for mustard in wheat fields. Depending upon the severity of the weed infestation, you may have a couple of months before weeds start to impact yields. A late February application is often soon enough, but why wait?

A 2014 K-State research trial evaluating the effect of timing of blue mustard control on wheat yield should encourage everyone to control weeds early. The picture below tells the story.



This field was planted in the fall of 2013. Blue mustard pressure was heavy. Fall treatment was applied November 4, 2013 and spring treatment was applied March 20, 2014. Draw your own conclusion. I think yours will agree with mine.

Most ALS-inhibiting herbicides (Amber and Finesse, plus some others) will do a nice job controlling annual mustards. If you wait too long to spray, or if you run into ALS-resistant weeds, then you might add 2,4-D, MCPA, or Huskie.

At that point, we'll consult with Dallas Peterson, K-State Research and Extension Weed Specialist. This is his picture, from his research plot. Dallas is our go-to guy for weed control advice. He'll help us out.

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 [gmcclore@ksu.edu](mailto:gmcclore@ksu.edu).

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