County Agent News Dan Folske September 12, 2016

Those Pesky Dandelions!

Every spring I get lots of calls about controlling dandelions in lawns, campgrounds, parks, and fields. There are a few decent options in fields if you don't have to worry about carryover and crop rotations but 2,4-D, dicamba, and premixes containing them like Trimec are the only viable



options for those lawns, parks, and similar areas. And even they can be tough on desirable plants while being only somewhat effective on the dandelions in the spring.

The real key to dandelion control is fall application. The dandelions are not blooming so homeowners and park goers are not noticing them but they are there and are in an important part of their life cycle. As these plants prepare for winter and next spring's early growth they are storing nutrients in their root system. Spraying with Trimec, Weed-B-Gone, and similar products can be very effective now as the plant will translocate those herbicides deep into its root system.

As I am writing this the weatherman is calling for temperatures in the low 30'sF the next couple of nights. If the temp would drop into the low or mid 20'sF for a very hard killing frost it would probably be too late to effectively spray but a light frost of 31F or 32F will not hurt dandelions and thistles.

Always read and follow all label directions when using any herbicide. Remember, if a little is good, a lot is not always better!

Breaking the Green Bridge

A warm fall in 2015 followed by an early spring in 2016 became the "perfect storm" for



wheat streak mosaic virus (WSM). Typically thought of as a winter wheat disease and seldom seen in spring grains, especially if following a

broadleaf crop. I saw several outbreaks of WSM, some of them severe, in spring wheat and durum following canola this year. Most often it was seen on no-till or minimum till with short time spans between spraying a preplant burndown and the seeding dates of the wheat. Grassy weeds like foxtail barley and green and yellow foxtails can be carriers of the virus and hosts for the wheat curl mite which spreads the disease. These plants are usually considered minor hosts but given the right conditions like last fall and this spring they can play an important part. Volunteer grains are the primary host. Herbicide applications can be very helpful in controlling the disease. One field I looked at had been partially sprayed last fall to control foxtail barley. The portion of the field which had been sprayed had very little WSM and the unsprayed portion of the field was a complete loss. Fall is a great time to control foxtail barley and killing volunteer wheat or durum now can really lower the chances of WSM next season. It will still be important to break the green bridge next spring but I know how difficult it can be to wait for the glyphosate to do its job when crunch time is here in the spring and rain is in the forecast.