

Conquering Quackgrass

Quackgrass, the worst weed in crops from New England to the Mid West, can be controlled with early fall application of the herbicides AAtrex or Outfox, says Nathan L. Hartwig, weed scientist at The Pennsylvania State University.

The weed needs to be controlled in croplands, he affirms, since a heavy infestation of quackgrass can reduce yields of almost any crop by 50 percent or more.

AAtrex and Outfox require at least 6 to 8 weeks to be absorbed into quackgrass roots and foliage prior to a hard frost, Dr. Hartwig explains. Quackgrass foliage will become yellow and remain yellow as long as the herbicide is working, he says.

Avoid using more than the recommended application, he points out, since a heavy application will kill the foliage but not the plant. AAtrex and Outfox

keep quackgrass from making use of sunlight to produce energy, a process known as photosynthesis. By obstructing photosynthesis during the fall, quackgrass will live on its stored energy and go into the winter in a weakened condition.

"If we have a long fall or if for some reason the quackgrass should turn green again before a killing frost comes, plow down the quackgrass before it has a chance to replace its energy reserves," Dr. Hartwig advises.

Fall applied AAtrex or Outfox is practical only on sod or where silage corn will be removed before the end of September, he claims. Farmers who can't get into a field 6 to 8 weeks prior to time of the usual killing frost can apply a first treatment of Outfox or AAtrex in the spring.

Normally, fall-treated fields to be planted to corn can be plowed in the spring with no loss of quackgrass control. Dr. Hartwig says that 95 per cent of the increase in quackgrass infestation comes from growth of underground stems or rhizomes. If allowed to grow unchecked, quackgrass can spread as much as 6 feet in every direction under ideal conditions in one growing season.

Some underground stems or rhizomes will survive by the spring following fall treatment. The initial 6 to 8 inches of regrowth by these large rhizomes will reduce their energy reserves. Early spring application of nitrogen will also stimulate regrowth of the quackgrass and further reduce energy reserves.

A second spring herbicide treatment is recommended at corn planting time or soon thereafter to finish off the quackgrass. This second treat-

ment will also control most annual weeds. In using herbicides, read the label carefully and follow safety precautions and recommendations.

Where fields are level, there is nothing wrong with applying these herbicides to frozen soil or even on top of snow—provided melting snow won't carry the chemicals off the field. Such treatment will allow the herbicide to leach into the root zone before the quackgrass starts to grow, immediately stopping production of energy from sunlight in the spring.

There is little chance of herbicide injury to small grain or legume seeding made in the spring a year after using dalapon followed by AAtrex or Outfox at corn planting time. While not as effective as Outfox or AAtrex, dalapon works best when applied to actively growing quackgrass in the fall or spring.

A corn crop itself also helps to control quackgrass, Dr. Hartwig observes. Competition from a good stand of corn can finish off the last 20 to 25 percent of the quackgrass.

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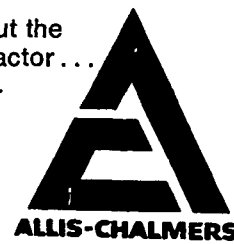
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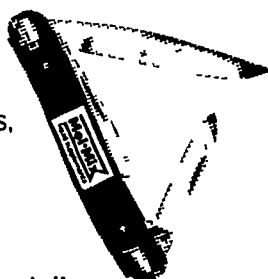
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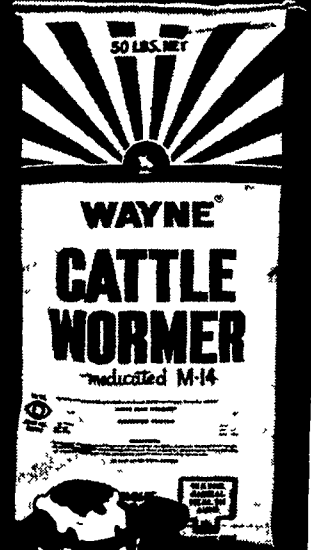
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