**Ragweed**

We have finally started to receive some excellent and much needed moisture. The rainfall is making an incredible difference for our pastures and hay meadows. I hope everyone had their fertilizer out and was able to take full advantage of the rainfall. The rain is going to really make the grass take off. However, the grass in most fields due to the drought was thin and the weeds are taking advantage of those openings and the moisture. One weed that I am seeing a lot of is the ever-present Ragweed.

There are several types of ragweed that can be found in Texas, the most common here in Comanche County and surrounding areas include: Western Ragweed, Common Ragweed, and Giant Ragweed. Ragweed is one of the most common forbs on our rangeland. In deep soils, its roots will reach a depth of 5 to 6 feet, making it extremely competitive with most of our grasses. For this reason, most cattlemen have a strong disliking for ragweed. Quail hunters on the other hand may have a soft spot for ragweed, as the seeds are great Quail food. If, however, you are an allergy sufferer you should have a strong dislike for ragweed. Most all fall allergies can be traced to ragweed; a single ragweed plant can produce up to a billion pollen grains.

Ragweed is a perennial and can produce new growth from roots. This year’s seedlings will not produce seeds until next year. Ragweed is an early germinator; this early germination allows it to get a jump on grass and decreases the chance for the grass to shade out the ragweed. Like most weeds, ragweed really comes on strong in over grazed areas or fields where drought has thinned the grass. These fields, which are mostly in the county this year, are prime for Western and Common Ragweed. Giant ragweed loves to grow in cattle lots or other areas where you have feed livestock, and the soil is rich in nutrients. Giant ragweed really is a giant; it can grow 10 to 12’ tall and it has a very rapid growth rate.

All ragweed can be controlled effectively with herbicides, but timing is particularly important. The Noble Foundation in Ardmore Oklahoma conducted herbicide trials on Western Ragweed in 2008 and 2009 these trials included: Milestone, GrazonNext, ForeFront, Cimarron Max, Grazon P+D, Range Star and 2,4-D amine applied at label rates. In each trial results were excellent, exceeding 90% control, for each herbicide. The average size of the ragweed at the treatment site was 6” or less.

If you have not already sprayed, now is the time to spray for ragweed, most I have seen is in that 2 to 4” size, and it will not take long for it to reach the 6” height which is the point that herbicides become less effective to totally ineffective at controlling the weed.