

Dr. G's Advice Column
Dr. Gary Bates, Director
UT Beef and Forage Center

Dear Dr. G. – I have a problem with unwanted guests. Every spring and summer I have weeds trying take over my tall fescue pasture. The horsenettle has become particularly bad. I need your help. *Pestered in Paris*

Dear Pestered, I can relate to your problem completely. Weeds are sort of like in-laws. You can tolerate a few, but when too many show up, something has got to be done. At my house, I just shut off the hot water. On Saturday when they usually take showers, they get uncomfortable and leave. Sadly, that won't work with horsenettle. Luckily, we can control horsenettle with a herbicide named Grazon Next. Apply 1.6 pints per acre to get good control. Research by Dr. Neil Rhodes at UT has shown that you can get excellent control if you apply the herbicide when the plants are blooming. Don't be surprised when this kills all your clover. You will have to wait a year to replant those.

Dr. G., I need some advice. My pastures have a thin stand of tall fescue. I usually have to add seed every couple of years. Regardless of what I do, I just can't seem to keep a thick stand. Can you help? *Dejected in Decatur*

Dear Dejected, I feel your pain. Thin stands are on my mind every morning and evening when I look in the mirror. But cheer up, we have some info that might help. One of the reasons for your thin stands might be due to overgrazing. Anytime you graze the fescue down and don't let it regrow before being grazed again, you are stressing the plant's energy reserves. If you consistently do this during the year, particularly during the hot summer, you will cause some of the plants to be severely weakened and die. You can prevent this stand thinning by letting the plants regrow to 8-10 inches after they are grazed. A good plan is to graze down to 3 inches, then remove cattle and let the grass get back to 8-10 inches. This will only be accomplished if you put up some electric fences and rotate your animals among your pastures. You don't have to move animals every day, but you need to focus on minimizing the overgrazing.

Dear Dr. G.- We need your help settling a disagreement in our house. I say the best time to apply lime is in the fall. My wife says you can apply lime anytime. Which of us is correct? *Married in Madisonville*

Dear Married- Congratulations on your recent marriage. Obviously you are a newlywed, because you haven't been married long enough to realize you don't argue with your wife. Over my 21 years of marriage, I hate to admit how many times we disagreed on an answer to something and she ended up being right. It is good that at least one of us has sense. But, back to your question. Your wife is right, you can put lime on anytime. The sooner the better. It will take the lime over year to work down through the soil and completely raise the pH. As soon as you get the soil test results back, go ahead and apply lime. There is no reason to have to wait until fall.