

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

 Cooperative  
Extension Service



## Farm Update

[daviess.ca.uky.edu](http://daviess.ca.uky.edu)

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES  
EDUCATION

Clint Hardy

Daviess County Extension Office

October 19, 2024

### Thoughts on Johnsongrass

Dr. Travis Legleiter, UK Extension Weed Specialist wrote the following article on johnsongrass, which has long been a problematic weed in Kentucky. It hasn't been at the top of our minds the last several years with the continual onslaught of weeds like waterhemp, Palmer amaranth, and Italian ryegrass. This year though, it seems Johnsongrass made a comeback or at least reminded us that it is still very much a problematic weed that needs to be managed. Unlike many weeds we deal with in our row crop acres, johnsongrass is perennial spread by seed and rhizomes. This allows johnsongrass to gain a foothold in the Kentucky landscape of no-till row crops along field borders and perennial forage fields and pastures where this weed tends to thrive and spread.

This past spring and summer, johnsongrass seemed to really explode and was much more prominent in our corn and soybean acres. I believe there were a couple of reasons for the perceived sudden increase in johnsongrass pressure. I believe we have been building our johnsongrass rhizomes for the past couple of years and the weather this year was set up perfectly for johnsongrass to thrive. Generally, across the state we had a great April for field work and planting of corn and early soybean and for burndown of winter annuals for May planted crops. Then we received multiple heavy rainfall events in May that kept planters and sprayers out of the

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

field. These spring conditions in combination with a warm winter and fields with existing johnsongrass rhizomes allowed for a perfect scenario for johnsongrass to thrive.

Following the successful clearing of winter annuals from the field, johnsongrass was able to immediately emerge from rhizomes and thrive in the late April and May conditions with little interruption from field activities. The good news is that our postemergence applications in both corn and soybeans were largely successful. Other than a few isolated locations, herbicide resistant Johnsongrass has not become prevalent in Kentucky and no cases of glyphosate resistance has been identified. This is not to say that we should not worry about that possibility though. As I indicated above, I believe in many of our no-till fields we have been allowing for the establishment of johnsongrass rhizome networks. Johnsongrass emerging from rhizomes is significantly harder to control than seedling johnsongrass. The management of rhizome johnsongrass should be approached from a long-term perspective rather than the short-term approach often taken with annual weeds. Having this long-term approach in mind, producers and consultants should be evaluating fields for the potential need for fall herbicide application. If you had fields with particularly heavy johnsongrass infestations this year, even if your post programs were effective, you should go observe those fields to see how much Johnsongrass has regrown or emerged since harvest. Fields with significant Johnsongrass regrowth or emergence this fall should be considered for a fall application. As a perennial plant, Johnsongrass has now started the process of preparing for its explosive reemergence next spring. It does this by pushing nutrients down into the rhizome network to be stored over the winter and to be used next spring. Farmers can use this to their advantage by making applications of glyphosate to the johnsongrass that will also move to the rhizome network causing significant damage to the network and

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

overall weakening or killing the plant going into next spring. However, it should not be expected that a single fall application will permanently take out the Johnsongrass in a field. It will take several years of intense management to deplete an established population. Again, Johnsongrass requires a long-term control approach. Here are a few keys for fall applications for johnsongrass. Scout fields to assure johnsongrass has had time to regrow or emerge following harvest. Apply 0.75 to 1.125 lb acid equivalent glyphosate plus AMS. If applications are occurring in late fall, target periods of warmer weather if possible.

## **Mulberries in no-till fields**

Mulberries are another perennial weed that are becoming more common in long term no-till fields. Like johnsongrass, the plants regrow after harvest until winter dormancy. The most effective control is digging those roots out but another option is to allow them to regrow 6-8 inches and a fall application of glyphosate plus 2,4-D and/or dicamba may help with control of these perennial species.

The Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is an Equal Opportunity Organization with respect to education and employment and authorization to provide research, education information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, physical or mental disability or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.