

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Summer Burning Pastures”*

Over the last few weeks here in the Flint Hills you may have noticed a few producers who are participating in late summer burning. Many producers are using summer burning as a management tool to help control different weeds, including Sericea Lespedeza, and woody species we have in our pastures. These late summer burns have different characteristics from an April burn.

- **More fuel for the fire** – Because summer fires have to chew through so much green growth, you’ll need more fuel for the drip torches. Some producers note using 3x more torch fuel for a summer burn than an April burn.
- **Slower pace** – Summer fires move a lot slower, so they’re generally a bit safer than spring fires. It’s possible to walk with them, but because you’re working in hotter ambient temperatures, it’s best to walk a little less.
- **Gettin’ Steamy** – Green plant material contains water, and fire quickly turns that water to steam. The smoke cloud looks dense, more intimidating, but that’s because of all the steam. For the people working the fire, as well as neighbors in the immediate area, the experience is less irritating.

Last week producers and natural resource agency professionals gathered on the Collinge Ranch in Greenwood County for the Summer Tallgrass Management Tour. One of the main topics of discussion was utilizing summer burning of pastures to maintain and control certain weeds and brushy species. Many ranchers are noting success with summer burning as a control tool for some problem species. On top of management benefits, we are also noting the positive outcomes when we are diversifying times of the year producers are burning in regards to air quality in our larger surrounding metropolitan cities. This year we have had fewer air quality issues reported than in years past, which makes the Flint Hills better neighbors to our larger surrounding cities.

Kansas State University continues to carry out research on the effects of late summer burning to control Sericea Lespedeza. Their research was conducted for 4 consecutive years and found that burning resulted in excellent control of sericea lespedeza, Baldwin’s ironweed, western ragweed, and invasive woody-stemmed plants, compared to traditional spring, dormant-season prescribed burning. In addition, major wildflower species prevalence increased in areas treated with prescribed fires during the summer compared with adjacent areas treated with prescribed fire during the spring.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Lindsay Shorter, at [lindsayshorter@ksu.edu](mailto:lindsayshorter@ksu.edu), or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow

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