



Spurweed

Spurweed is a tiny winter annual with parsley-like leaves that grows close to the soil line. It may also be called stickers or burweed. Spurweed will germinate in the fall and winter and remains small. It normally will go unnoticed until the plant matures. White flowers will bloom in late winter. As the temperatures increase in the spring, the pollinated flowers begin to set fruit. The fruiting structures look like small rosette buttons developing in the leaf axils. In mid-to-late spring, the seed in the fruit structure develops spines that become sharp when the fruit dries out. This is the part that gets stuck in your or your pet's feet.

Spurweed can be prevented by maintaining a healthy turf. Healthy turf competes for water, nutrients, and space. A healthy turf can be encouraged by fertility, irrigation, and mowing height. It will act as a

physical barrier, choking out many opportunistic weeds. If you have warm-season grass (like bermudagrass or zoysiagrass), it may help to use the highest cutting setting for the last cut of the season in the fall. This will ensure a thick canopy is present over winter. If you do not like having a deeper yard during the winter months there are other options to control spurweed.



If the spurweed is already present in your lawn, it is critical to control it before the fruiting structure develops in the spring. The best time to apply herbicides for spurweed control is in the winter months of December, January, and February. During these months, the warm season turf species are dormant and not sensitive to many herbicide applications. In most areas of Arkansas, you can also effectively control spurweed in March. The best option for homeowners to control spurweed is a post-emergence application of one of the various two and three-way mixes of 2,4-D, dicamba, and MCP. One of the most common trade names for herbicides in this category is Trimec. These products may be used on

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tall fescue, fall overseeded bermudagrass in which the overseeded cool-season grass has been mowed four to five times, and non-overseeded bermudagrass. The post-emergence herbicides should be applied on a sunny day when the air temperature is at least 55 degrees. Spurweed should be evaluated two to three weeks later. If the control is not acceptable, you may make additional applications. Always read the label to make sure the formulation and percentage of chemicals are appropriate for your lawn.

Hay Management

Hay supply may be short for many producers due to the prolonged drought we had in the summer. Conserving hay will be very important this winter for some. Fortunately, there are some ways to help reduce hay waste during feeding. Hay fed in hay rings will reduce hay waste. If you still plan to unroll hay, you may consider using a temporary electric fence to reduce waste from trampling. To do this you must first unroll a bale, then string up an electrified polywire (or some other wire used for an electric fence) down the line of hay. The wire needs to be about 30 inches above the hay. This will cause the cows to line up as they would at feed bunks, eliminating their ability to lay in or trample the hay. Feeding hay in various locations is a cost-effective way of maintaining or increasing the phosphorus, potassium, and organic matter in the soil. On average, a 4x5 round bale will contain about 100 pounds of 17-17-17 fertilizer. The amount of fertilizer in the bale will depend on forage analysis.



Avian Flu

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 subtype was detected in poultry in the US back in February of 2022 and has been a problem since. A backyard/hobby flock has recently tested positive in southwest Arkansas. The losses and costs associated with Avian Influenza can be detrimental to backyard and hobby flocks. It is extremely important for all flock owners to practice biosecurity to keep their flocks as safe as possible.

You as the poultry owner should be able to recognize signs of illness in your flock. There are many poultry diseases but some of the first signs of illness are:

- sudden deaths in your birds without any prior signs of illness
- drop or cessation in egg production or soft shell or misshaped eggs
- lack of appetite
- sneezing, gasping, difficulty breathing
- diarrhea
- drop in water consumption
- a bird stumbling and/or falling down
- twisting of the head and neck
- discharges from the eyes and/or nostrils
- swelling of the comb, face, and eyelids
- ruffled feathers, huddling
- a bird keeping to itself



Biosecurity can be defined as all practices and procedures to prevent or lessen the introduction of a disease into a flock. There are several practices you can implement to help keep diseases out of your flock. **Clean and disinfect.** Keep the facilities clean and free of weeds, debris, and spilled feed. You should also keep the areas around your pens and facilities clean. **Practice good vermin control.** Mice and rats can carry diseases that can also infect birds. They also attract snakes. It is important to control flies, buffalo gnats, and mosquitos as well because they also can spread diseases through the flock. Secure poultry pens are necessary to exclude wild birds, wildlife, and pets. **Keep away/Restrict visitors.** Visitors may accidentally contaminate your flock. If you do have visitors, make them clean their shoes or boots and disinfect them before visiting your poultry flock. A separate pair of boots for visitors and yourself to only wear around the birds are even better. Keep the pens locked to prevent unwanted access. **Get help/Report the unusual.** If you notice a sick bird in your flock, get help immediately. Contact the local veterinarian, extension agent, the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Division, or USDA hotline. If you have a bird die, consider submitting it to a diagnostic laboratory for evaluation.

Keeping small flocks of poultry is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the USA. If you already have a small flock or are planning to start one, biosecurity procedures will be useful to protect your flock and those around you.

PAT

There are two Private Applicator Trainings upcoming. The first one will be held on Friday, February 14, 2025, beginning at 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. The second one will be held on Friday, March 14, 2025, beginning at 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. The cost of either training will be \$20.00. Both trainings will be held at the Howard County Extension Homemakers Education Center, 425 N. 2nd Street, Nashville. Please call our office at 870-845-7517 to register for these trainings.



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