News Release
For Immediate Use
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Old World Bluestem; What is it? Why be Concerned?

Osage and Coffey County Conservation Districts with Kansas State Research and Extension units Coffey County and Frontier District, have teamed up to inform the public about the hazards of old world bluestems (OWB). The meeting will take place 10:30 a.m. until noon, October 8th, at a pasture site in southern Osage County. Directions from Beto Junction (I-35 and 75 Highway) go north on 75 to 341st street, west to Lewelling (only a 200 yards or so), north to 333rd street, and west 1/4 mile. Watch for signs. Producers will have an opportunity to identify OWB, see areas where OWB was controlled by recommended herbicides, ask questions to specialists about the recovery of the native grass species or the need to reseed. A free hotdog and chip lunch, sponsored by Vaughn-Roth Land Brokers, will be available.

Two local producers will discuss their control applications. Walt Fick, KSU Range Management Specialist, will talk about the origin of OWB, why we should be concerned, help with plant identification, and outline control options. Scott Marsh, Kansas Department of Ag Plant Protection and Weed Control, will give the states current view of OWB as a possible noxious weed. Robert Harkrader, with Quail Unlimited, will discuss how it negatively affects the quail population.

While these grasses are called bluestems they are not closely related to big bluestem or little bluestem. Old world bluestems are a group of introduced grasses from southeast Soviet Union, Turkey and surrounding areas. The OWB are survivors of centuries of overgrazing. They are drought tolerant, aggressive, prolific seed producers and are unpalatable compared to our native species. When pastures are overgrazed or stressed by drought the OWB invade into our native range and reduce the productivity of our pastures. Once OWB invade a pasture the control currently is by using herbicide.

In Osage County OWB can be found in pastures, hay meadows, road ditches (concerns about spreading to pastures), Corp of Engineers Land, and state owned right of ways. These grasses are going to be hard to control, so early identification and control will be necessary to prevent further spread. Please plan to come to the Oct. 8th meeting to learn about this serious problem. Sericea Lespedeza control may not hold a candle to the old world bluestems.

For more information contact Rod Schaub, Frontier District Extension Agent, at 785-828-4438.
Above: recently headed OWB (Yellow Bluestem)

Below: winter picture of OWB note the very light color compared to our good native species