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STAMP OUT CHICKWEED AND HENBIT FROM ALFALFA

By J. W. Herron and W. C. Thompson

What are chickweed and henbit?

Chickweed and henbit are winter annual weeds that grow during cool weather. The seeds germinate primarily in the fall, and the plants continue to grow and live through the winter. They develop new seeds from April until early summer. Then they die.

Where do chickweed and henbit cause the greatest problem in alfalfa?

Chickweed and henbit thrive best where there is a lack of competition, such as in new plantings of alfalfa and poor stands of established alfalfa.

How can chickweed and henbit be controlled?

Any good management practice that increases competition by stimulating the growth of alfalfa and the growth of grass with alfalfa will aid considerably in crowding out the chickweed and henbit.

For chemical control of chickweed and henbit, spray DNBP (Premerge or Sinox PE) on infested fields at the rate of 1 to 3 quarts in 20 to 40 gallons of water per acre to dormant alfalfa. Apply 1 to 1 1/2 quarts in the fall when chickweed is very small (however, not until August-seeded alfalfa plants have 2 or more trifoliolate leaves) and repeat the application in March before new growth starts. Use the higher rate if chickweed is matted on the ground, or if henbit is heavy in the stand. Spray only when the temperature is 55 to 60 degrees or warmer and fair weather is predicted for 12 hours after treatment.

Best control is obtained when the chemical is applied correctly and good coverage of the weeds is extremely important.

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