

Fall Is A Good Time to Control Woody Plants in Pastures

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Late summer and fall are excellent seasons to tackle unwanted trees and brush in pastures. Cooler weather slows forage growth, but woody plants continue to store energy in their roots, making control efforts more effective. Left unchecked, species like elm, locust, osage orange (hedge), and Russian olive can quickly spread and reduce valuable forage production.

Two of the most common methods for controlling scattered trees are **basal bark** and **cut-stump** treatments.

- **Basal bark method:** For smaller trees (less than 4–6 inches in diameter), spray the lower 12–15 inches of the trunk with a mixture containing triclopyr (sold under trade names such as Remedy Ultra or Pathfinder II) in diesel fuel. The spray should thoroughly wet all sides of the stem down to the ground line. Ready-to-use products such as Pathfinder II are available, and premixes like PastureGard HL are also effective.
- **Cut-stump method:** For larger trees, cut the trunk off at ground level, then immediately treat the freshly cut surface with herbicide. The cambium layer (the light-colored wood just inside the bark) is the most important area to cover. Triclopyr solutions work well, and dicamba products such as Clarity or Sterling Blue are also effective on many species. Treat the cut surface with triclopyr and diesel fuel **within 30-60 minutes** before the sap seals over the exposed area. Eastern red cedar is an exception—simply cut it below the lowest green branch, and the tree will not resprout.

Keep in mind that many common pasture trees, such as ash, elm, oak, persimmon, locust, and willow, will sprout vigorously from stumps or roots if left untreated. Treating them correctly the first time will prevent multi-stemmed clumps from forming.

Producers have several herbicide options, and the right choice depends on species, tree size, and site conditions. Always check the product label for mixing directions, grazing or haying restrictions, and site use approvals. For example, Tordon RTU and Pathway can only be used in non-cropland areas like fence rows or rights-of-way, not in pastures.

Application can be done with backpack sprayers, ATV-mounted sprayers with hand wands, or even paintbrushes for small jobs. For cutting, tools like hydraulic shears or saws equipped with spray nozzles can make the process more efficient.

Tips for success:

- Always follow the directions on the herbicide label.
- Before spraying, brush any sawdust or debris off the cut surface.
- Apply herbicide to freshly cut stump (30-60min after).
- Spray cut surface and stump to ground level.
- Spray exposed roots above the soil surface.
- The cambium layer is the critical area to spray.
- Apply enough liquid that it pools on the cut surface.

With the right timing and technique, fall treatments can help keep woody plants in check and protect valuable pasture forage for livestock.

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