

## KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## OFFICIAL

## MUSK THISTLE CONTROL PROGRAM

Revised November 1, 2006

**DESCRIPTION**

Musk thistle is primarily a biennial or winter annual but may occur as a summer annual. The leaves of musk thistle are deeply lobed, hairless, and are dark green with a light green mid-rib. A silver gray leaf margin is characteristic of each spine tipped lobe.

The leaf base extends down the stem to give the plant a winged appearance. Musk thistle is the first of the Kansas thistles to bloom in the spring. The terminal flower is large (1 2 to 3 inches in diameter), solitary and usually nodding or bent over slightly. The plant is freely branched and each branch may have one flower or more in addition to the terminal flower. The flowers are purple and are "powder puff" shaped. Seed dispersal begins 7 to 10 days after blooming. Seeds are straw-colored, oblong, and 1/8 inch in length.

The seeds are attached to parachute-like hairs (pappus) which allow for their dispersal by wind currents.

**PREVENTION OF SPREAD OF MUSK THISTLE**

Musk thistle may be found throughout the State with heaviest infestations found in the north eastern one third of the State.

Musk thistle reproduces only by seed. The likelihood of new infestations will be reduced by any action to prevent the production and movement of seed. Planting weed free seed, feeding hay free of musk thistle seed and cleaning equipment before leaving infested areas are methods which will prevent the spread of musk thistle.

**MUSK THISTLE CONTROL PRACTICES**

The control of musk thistle shall mean preventing the production of viable seed.

**CULTURAL CONTROL**

Mowing - Mow with a rotary mower before the first appearance of pink on the flowers. Mowing at full bloom will prevent seed production Mow cleanly and closely and repeat as needed for control.

Hand Cutting - Digging - Cut between the first appearance of pink and the first appearance of brown on the pappus of the earliest heads. Cutting 2 inches below ground level at any stage should kill the plant. **Pick heads that are beyond the bud stage and place in a tight container.** Bury the container at a landfill or other site that will not be unearthed.

**HERBICIDES APPROVED FOR CONTROLLING MUSK THISTLE**

The following herbicides may be used for cost-share with landowners. Other products labeled and registered for use on this noxious weed in Kansas may be used in accordance with label directions but are not available for cost-share.

Be sure to follow all label directions and precautions. For additional information consult the current KSU publication of "Chemical Weed Control for Field Crops, Pastures, Rangeland, and Noncropland".

2,4-D Amine or LV Ester

Chlorsulfuron (Telar)

Dicamba (Banvel, Clarity, Vanquish, and others)

Dicamba + 2,4-D (Banvel + 2,4-D)

Picloram (Tordon)  
Picloram + 2,4-D (Tordon + 2,4-D)  
Metsulfuron methyl (Escort XP, Ally, Cimarron)  
Metsulfuron methyl + 2,4-D (Escort XP + 2,4-D)  
Imazapic (Plateau)  
Clopyralid + Triclopyr (Redeem R&P)  
Triasulfuron + Dicamba (Rave)  
Dicamba + Diflufenzopyr (Overdrive)  
Imazapic + Glyphosate (Journey)  
Aminopyralid (Milestone)  
Metsulfuron methyl + 2,4-D + Dicamba (Cimarron Max)  
Clopyralid (Stinger)  
Clopyralid + 2,4-D (Curtail)  
Dicamba + Diflufenzopyr + 2,4-D  
Dicamba + Diflufenzopyr + Picloram  
Dicamba + Diflufenzopyr + Metsulfuron methyl

### **BIOLOGICAL CONTROL**

Two insects for biological control of musk thistle are approved but must meet the requirements set forth in K.A.R. 4-8-41. Consult with your County Noxious Weed Director for more information.