Tropical Soda Apple Control is Important

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Tropical Soda Apple (TSA) has been in South Florida for about 20 years. It was specifically identified in 1990 when it became apparent that TSA was developing into a serious noxious weed problem in Hendry and Collier counties.

Today, TSA is found throughout Florida. This statewide distribution of TSA occurred with the movement of cattle that had recently grazed pastures containing TSA and its fruit. Following the long distance movement of TSA seed by cattle, short distance movement onto areas surrounding property where TSA was introduced came about through the movement of seed in the digestive system of deer, hogs, and birds that ate TSA fruit. Flooding and mechanical transmission on equipment may also contribute to spread.

The Range Cattle REC has 3000 acres located adjacent to pastures with abundant crops of TSA plants and no control measures. We have consistently found TSA plants on research center pastures for the past 5 or more years. By maintaining a constant vigil we spray about 200 plants annually with Remedy. With these measures we do not have a TSA problem. Without them we would probably have a TSA infestation beyond control.

There is currently much more interest about TSA because states to Florida's immediate north are concerned about the movement of Florida cattle originating from TSA infested pastures in Florida into their state. These states are presently working cooperatively with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to develop practices by which Florida cattle can be shipped into their states, lowering concerns about transporting TSA seed.
by using best management practices.

Mr. Richard Gaskalla of FDACS, Division of Plant Industry, heads a regional TSA task force comprised of southern states which has published practical recommendations for control and management of TSA.

Regardless of the procedures developed relative to cattle shipped to other states, Florida cattlemen need to make a concentrated effort to control TSA on their ranches and farms. There are a number of UF/IFAS publications available on control TSA written by Dr. Jeff Mullahey, Dr. Paul Mislevy, and others. These can be obtained at the local county agricultural office or over the Internet from EDIS, and other UF/IFAS web sites.

University of Florida/IFAS researchers are working on biological control methods using a plant virus. Hopefully this will give better control of TSA than chemical herbicides, and at a fraction of the cost.

For questions or comments regarding this publication contact Findlay Pate.