

ONA REPORTS

published in

THE FLORIDA CATTLEMAN AND LIVESTOCK JOURNAL

May-1994

Control of Blackberry Briars

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Sand blackberry is a perennial shrub that infests Florida pasture forming dense thickets that shade and reduce growth of pasture grasses. The prickles on the stems can inhibit grazing, and they can damage reproductive organs of bulls. Mowing or fire alone provides a short term solution, but only treatment with herbicides can provide lasting control. Research at Westby Corp., Carlton 2X4, and Turner Ranches over the past three years has indicated that Remedy (a trade name of Dow Elanco) herbicide applied at 0.5 lb./acre active ingredient (one pint at \$8.50/pint) in late March or April reduced blackberry cover to an average 18 percent compared to 80 percent in non-treated areas. Mowing or burning pasture before herbicide treatment did not improve control, but mowing or burning in winter may allow more complete spray coverage of regrowth in spring, which will help the herbicide be more effective. Applying Remedy in a minimum of 40 gallons/ acre of spray solution with a surfactant is important since new growth is deep in the dense blackberry thickets. For this reason, we also suggest using about 40 lb. pressure at the nozzle to force more spray through the canopy. Rates up to 2.0 lb./acre have been tested, and greater rates do result in slightly better kill, but twice or even four times more herbicide does not justify an additional 10 percent reduction in cover. Since no treatment completely eliminated blackberries with a single application, it is better to treat a pasture two times rather than to use a single high rate such as 1.0 lb./acre (1 quart/acre). Using split applications of one pint each time, such as April and September, or better yet, applications in April one year apart, blackberry can be reduced to less than five percent cover. It is difficult, and may not be economically practical to reduce cover to zero.