

This column features questions from readers submitted via the website. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit BarnyardsandBackyards.com. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards & Backyards!*



ask Sam

question

Dear Sam,

I'm buying a property with a big Russian knapweed problem. It produces a lot of seed. Should I try to control seed production? And, is one time of the year better than another for chemical control?

– *Tony, Riverton*

Dear Tony,

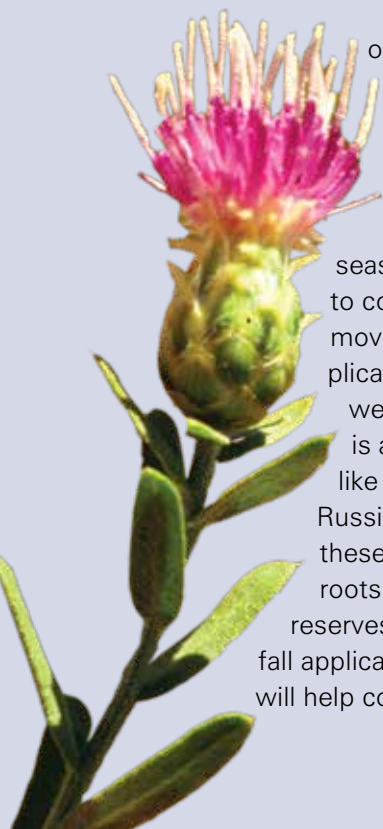
Russian knapweed is definitely a weed that warrants concern. Russian knapweed is a creeping perennial plant with two modes of reproduction: seed and vegetative reproduction by root buds. You are right to be concerned about seed production. Reducing seed production will reduce the potential long-distance dispersal of the knapweed onto other parts of your property or onto neighboring properties. If the patch is small enough to warrant hand labor, you can clip, bag, and burn all the seed heads. Estimates of Russian knapweed seed viability in the soil suggest most seeds can survive three to four years, so you may effectively reduce the growth of future generations from seed.

Russian knapweed's primary method of reproduction (and local spread) is through creeping rhizomes from which new shoots develop and grow. These extensive root systems (roots have been documented to grow up to 23 feet deep by the second growing season!) make Russian knapweed difficult to control. Systemic herbicides, which can move within the plant from the site of application to other areas of the plant, may weaken root systems through time. Fall is a good time to apply some herbicides, like Milestone, Transline, or Plateau, to Russian knapweed. Weed scientists think these types of herbicides are carried to the roots with carbohydrates as the plants store reserves to be ready to grow next spring. A fall application as the plants begin to go dormant will help control the weed next year. However,

plan on long-term, integrated tactics when trying to control tough perennial weeds such as Russian knapweed. Reducing seed production, weakening the plant through herbicide applications or other stressors, and providing stiff competition from a vigorous stand of desirable vegetation will help control Russian knapweed.

– *Sam*

answer



An advertisement for Wyoming Livestock Roundup. The background features a silhouette of a cowboy on a horse against a sunset sky. The text reads: "WYOMING LIVESTOCK ROUNDUP", "The Weekly News Source for Wyoming's Ranchers, Farmers and AgriBusiness Community.", and "www.wylr.net". A small image of the Roundup newspaper is shown. At the bottom, the address and phone numbers are listed: "P.O. Box 850, Casper, WY 82602, (800) 967-1647 • (307) 234-2700".