Old World Bluestem (OWB)

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Two Primary OWBs in Kansas

- Caucasion bluestem (Bothriochloa bladhii)
  - Warm season perennial grass native to subtropical Asia and Africa
- Yellow Bluestem (Bothriochloa ischaemum)
  - Warm season perennial from southern Europe and Asia
  (Both introduced into the United States in the early 1900’s)
Caucasion Bluestem

- Small blue-gray graceful grass, with flowering stems that can reach one to three feet high
- Forms dense tufts of blue-green smooth leaf blades up to 12 inches long and less than a ¼ inch wide with a thickened mid-vein
- Nodes are purple-tinged and may be smooth or with short hairs
Yellow Bluestem

- Larger than Caucasian bluestem, and has yellow-green leaves that are usually smooth
- Sheaths are rounded and blades are flat or folded
- Nodes may be smooth or with short hairs
OWB

**OWB Spread**

- Both grasses spread by root and by seed
- Length of seed viability in the soil is unknown
- May be spread by machine, animal, or wind
  - Be extremely cautious where machines, vehicles, and livestock have been or where they come from
  - Origination of hay
OWB

- Problems on the landscape
  - Not preferred as much by grazing livestock especially cattle, in comparison to native bluestem species
  - Tolerates extreme grazing pressure
  - Prolific seed producer
Problems on the landscape

- Very drought tolerant
- Alters soil function (carbon-to-nitrogen ratio that inhibits the growth of native plants)
OWB

Photo by Doug Spencer
OWB

Photo by Alex Miller
Problems on the landscape

- Seems to accelerate erosion on rangelands
- Often invades or occupies difficult control areas in pastures or rangeland
- Costly? (stay tuned for presentations to follow)
Previous attempts to control

- Spot treatment approach
  - Earth scorch approach
    - Fire and non-selective herbicide
    - Mixed results

Future

- Selective herbicide approach
NRCS Position on OWB

- Extreme concern
- Challenging resource concern
- Scout pastures for evidence of OWB presence
- Catch and treat
NRCS Position on OWB

- Evolving approach to treatment/management/control
- Follow Kansas State University recommendations and product label
- Payment Schedule Scenarios
  - EQIP (Grazinglands)
OWB

Information sources and references:
- USDA Plants Database
- Kansas State University
- Missouri Department of Conservation
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