


# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



University of Kentucky  
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Cooperative Extension Service



**Farm Update**  
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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES  
EDUCATION

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## Poison Hemlock Control Begins Long Before it Flowers

Poison hemlock weeds have had a presence in Davieess County for many years but have become very widespread over the past 10. I get calls about it every year at this time as the plants are displaying their tall height and white flowers. The calls this past week were more than ever, an indicator the toxic weed has progressively distributed throughout the county in field borders and non-crop right of ways. Despite efforts of the state to implement control of the terrible weed through the noxious weed herbicide program, spraying now is too late to benefit. Herbicide control should be done in the late winter daytime when air temperatures begin to rise and are maintained above 55F. This is when cool-season weeds are younger and begin their active vegetative growth before initiating flowers later in the spring. Winter annual and biennial weeds typically germinate from seed in the fall and produce flowers during the spring.

Poison hemlock is easily recognized throughout the winter and early spring. Classified as a biennial, it often grows as a winter annual in Kentucky, particularly plants that germinate during the previous fall. Poison hemlock plants form rosettes that remain green throughout the winter in a somewhat semi-dormant stage. These young rosettes are often found in areas where poison hemlock was present the previous year, particularly along fence rows and other isolated areas. Younger plants can be identified by their fern-like leaves with leaf petioles that have

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purple spotting and no hairs. After resuming active growth in late winter, they form larger rosettes. Later flower stalks elongate during the spring producing clusters of white flowers in June. Mature plants can grow up to 6 to 9 feet tall.

The best time for control using herbicides is generally when plants are in the younger rosette stages of growth in late February and early March. Herbicide products containing 2,4-D, dicamba+2,4-D (eg. Weedmaster, Brash, Rifle-D, etc.), and aminopyralid (i.e. GrazonNext, DuraCor) are the preferred choices for obtaining effective control. Effectiveness of chemical control can decrease as plants begin to elongate and become more mature. Poison hemlock plants can be toxic to animals; therefore, when using herbicidal control methods on larger plants it is important to remove animals from treated areas. Animals are more likely to graze poison hemlock plants following herbicide treatment than before. On mature plants, mechanical methods such as mowing can be an alternative control method if infested areas are accessible. Mowing and other mechanical control efforts should be done after flower stalks elongate but before plants begin to flower.

Last fall it was brought to my attention of KY 31 tall fescue seed being sold locally with poison hemlock listed as a percentage noxious weeds on the state-certified seed tag. I was very surprised to learn of this and asked the state seed inspector to investigate how this is allowed in Kentucky. He reported that the Kentucky revised statute concerning Kentucky seed law does allow poison hemlock to be allowed up to a certain percentage. The K.R.S. concerning seed laws is not going to be brought forward in the general assembly anytime soon so use this information to make informed purchase decisions. Buy only certified seed with noxious seeds identified on the seed tag, and if poison hemlock is listed, don't purchase that seed.

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## **Grain Market Outlook Meeting**

Dr. Grant Gardner, the new Extension Grain Marketing Specialist will be at the Daviess County Extension office Wednesday, June 14 at 7:00 p.m. to provide an update on the USDA expectations of the 2023 crop regarding supply, demand, and market opportunities. No meal is planned, just information. All are welcome.

## **4-H Camp Signup Underway**

Daviess County is camping July 4-7 at the West Kentucky 4-H camp at Dawson Springs in Hopkins County. Enrollment is open to all youth ages 9-14, cost is \$200.00. Each year more than 100 youth, teen, and adult leaders from Daviess County participate in a fun, activity-filled week. Call the office at 270-685 8480 or go on our website at <https://daviess.ca.uky.edu/4hcamp> for more information.

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