



Farmers Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation

504 S. Broadway, Glasgow, KY 42141 • P.O. Box 1298, Glasgow, KY 42142 • (270) 651-2191 • Fax (270) 651-7332

Farmers RECC's Herbicides and Vegetation Management Program Questions and Answers

Why are young trees being sprayed?

Mowing tall-growing trees is a temporary solution since mowing does not prevent regrowth. In fact, young trees often re-sprout from its existing stump and root system, into many more stems than were originally cut. Repeated mowing or hand clearing causes the vegetation to become thicker and taller after mowing. Eventually, this dense re-growth will shade out more desirable small growing plants. Herbicides can be selectively applied to the tall growing, undesirable trees to prevent this re-growth. Eliminating the taller competition then helps to release smaller growing shrubs and grasses. These low growing plant communities eventually form dense communities that tend to resist invasion by tree seedlings in the future.

What herbicides are being used? Are they harmful to humans and animals?

Farmers RECC's contractors apply general use herbicides that are similar to the products you might purchase at the store to control weeds in your lawn. When used properly, these products are no more harmful to humans or animals than common household products. Because they are so effective on plants, they are used in diluted solutions, usually less than five percent (5%); the rest is water.

How do these herbicides work?

They work by interfering with the metabolic process specific to plants. The active ingredients in modern brush control herbicides inhibit the production of enzymes that are essential for the plant to make protein, or to complete photosynthesis. Photosynthesis is the process through which a tree makes its food. When production of these enzymes is interrupted, the plant cannot make its own food and eventually dies. These enzymes are not found in humans or animals.

How safe are the products being used?

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registers only those products that have passed thorough testing. Only registered herbicides are approved for use to control brush on rights-of-way. While every activity we perform has some level of risk, the herbicides that have been chosen for use on Farmers RECC rights-of-way have a very low toxicity to either humans or animals and are less toxic than common household products such as aspirin and drain cleaner. The selective use of herbicides to control regrowth after clearing actually reduces the risk of injury to line clearance tree trimmers. It also improves environmental quality of reducing rutting, and preventing the destruction of compatible desirable low growing plant species.

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How have these products been tested?

Prior to the registration by the EPA, herbicides must undergo several years of rigorous laboratory and field testing. Herbicides are among the most exhaustively tested products on the market today. Both the active ingredient (that is, the part of the product that actually has an effect on plants) and the final product (herbicides are often mixed with water at very low rates of 1 to 5% of the product) are tested repeatedly to determine whether they have potentially harmful side effects.

Are the vegetables in my garden safe to eat after the herbicides are applied?

Your vegetable garden would not have been directly sprayed, whether it is on or off the right-of-way. Farmers RECC's contractors are trained to avoid vegetables gardens just as they avoid the many agricultural fields adjacent to brush acreage on Farmers RECC rights-of-way.

Some vegetation in my yard appears to have been affected by the herbicide application. Is a certified arborist available to look at the vegetation and assess the situation?

Farmers RECC utilize Environmental Consultants, Inc. (ECI) to manage the day-to-day operations of the vegetation management program. The ECI System Arborists is an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist. ECI is trained to recognize the effects of herbicides on plants and are available to assess our concerns and answer any questions you may have.

How long will the herbicides remain active once the herbicide has been applied?

The herbicides that are used are designed to work inside the plant and break down very quickly, in a matter of days or weeks, in the presence of sunlight or in the soil. Whatever is not taken into the plant before it dries disappears quickly.

May our children and pets play in the yard after the herbicide has been applied?

Herbicides are applied only to the brush areas in the right-of-way. In other words, unless your yard is on the right-of-way and contains brush, it would not have been sprayed. The area that is sprayed is safe to re-enter as soon as the crew has moved off and the vegetation has dried.

Are the applicators Farmers RECC hires qualified to apply herbicides?

All crew members are required to be trained in the proper application methods, and must work under the supervision of a fully licensed herbicide applicator. The licensed applicator must pass a test of their general knowledge regarding pesticide safety and their approved use and disposal, label requirements, first aid, and the laws and regulations pertaining to herbicide use in Kentucky.



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Why do healthy plants that were treated still look healthy?

The action of some of the herbicides used can be slow, and the results may not be evident until the following season. This enables the plant's system to effectively move the herbicide throughout the plant to fully control its roots and prevent re-growth.

Can wildlife benefit from areas that have been treated with herbicides?

University data and other research have shown that in areas treated with herbicides to control tree growth, a species shift takes place. Tall growing tree species are controlled, while desirable shrubs and grasses are released. With reduced competition, the desirable species flourish, providing an increase in food and cover for wildlife including quail, turkey, songbirds and deer. Additionally, this management technique can increase shrub habitat, which, according to the National Audubon Society, is a threatened habitat type for songbirds in the United States.

Where can I find more information about the herbicides being used?

There are several websites available online. However, the best source of information in your local area is the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, <https://www.kyagr.com>. In addition, the ECI staff at Farmers RECC is available to meet with you regarding specific questions you may have about the herbicide treatment planned for or conducted on your property. You can call the Farmers RECC call center at 270-651-2191 to speak with a member of the ECI staff.