

## **Best Management Practices for Lifting Tropical Soda Apple-Free Bahiagrass Sod**

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Lifting bahiagrass sod from pastures has become a profitable business for many ranchers in Florida. This practice requires a great deal of planning as well as mechanical and cultural inputs. In addition, ranchers need to realize that the movement of tropical soda apple (TSA) plants or seed is in violation of State laws and rules. Therefore, sod companies cannot legally lift sod from TSA-infested pastures. Considering this, it is important to manage pastures to ensure that TSA seed is not spread to other areas within Florida.

Although it is virtually impossible to eliminate all TSA seed in the soil seed-bank, preventing additional TSA seed production in pastures will lessen the chance of moving viable seed when lifting sod. Current data suggests that TSA seed is viable in the soil for at least 2 years. Therefore, if bahiagrass sod is to be lifted from your pastures, a good pro – active TSA management plan is needed prior to lifting bahiagrass sod.

For many years, a highly effective strategy for controlling existing TSA plants with Remedy herbicide was used. However, new TSA seedlings were quite common as Remedy provided no soil residual activity. With the recent labeling of Milestone™ and Forefront™ herbicides in Florida, residual activity on germinating TSA seeds is possible. Both of these herbicides are extremely effective in controlling existing TSA plants and provide residual control of TSA seedlings for at least 6 months following application. The use of these new products has changed our guidelines for TSA control in pastures. If these guidelines can be followed, the likelihood of transporting viable TSA seed through sod lifting can be dramatically reduced.

Best management practices for reducing TSA seed transport through lifting bahiagrass sod:

1. Dense stands of TSA. Apply Milestone (5 to 7 fl. oz/A) or Forefront (2 to 2.6 pt/A) to actively growing TSA plants prior to fruit formation. If plants are fruiting, mowing is recommended first with the herbicide application occurring approximately 30 days later after regrowth of mowed plants is evident. Monitor the treated pasture for escaped plants and be prepared to spot spray with Milestone (10 ml per 2.5 gal), Forefront (50 ml per 2.5 gal), or Remedy (50 ml per 2.5 gal), plus surfactant and color marker as needed. Continue to monitor for at least 1 year and determine if additional spot-spraying is sufficient, or if the entire pasture should receive another broadcast application. Considering that TSA seeds remain viable in the soil for at least 2 years, it is best to broadcast spray Milestone or Forefront and retreat as necessary for 2 years prior to lifting sod. If re-treating be sure to apply at least 60 days prior to lifting sod to ensure that all treated plants are dead.
2. Sparse stands of TSA. Spot spray plants before fruiting with Milestone (10 ml per 2.5 gal), Forefront (50 ml per 2.5 gal), or Remedy (50 ml per 2.5 gal), plus surfactant and color marker as needed. Monitor every 45 to 60 days to determine if additional spot-spraying is needed.
3. If TSA has been a significant problem in part of a pasture for many years, it is best to avoid lifting sod from this area. It is better to sacrifice a portion of the pasture, than to transport TSA seed.

Do not exceed a total of 7 fl. oz/A/yr of Milestone or 2.6 pt/A/yr of Forefront.

For additional TSA related information, see <http://tsa.ifas.ufl.edu/>.