

EXTENSION NOTES



from **Rebecca Konopka**
Carter County Extension Office
Agriculture & Natural Resources
carter.ca.uky.edu

Black Cherry Trees Around Livestock

Black cherry trees grow in abundance across Kentucky's landscape. These trees are an important timber and wildlife species, yet can cause cyanide poisoning in livestock. The leaves of the trees, especially wilted ones, are high in cyanic acid, which can kill livestock by depriving them of oxygen.

You can reduce the likelihood of livestock losses from wild black cherry trees by cutting them out of fencerows. Make removing cherry trees that pose a risk, such as those that could potentially lose branches or are in poor condition, a high priority. Leaving healthy, well-pruned trees to become a potential timber source may be an option to consider. Remember to check fencerows periodically for new trees that are inevitable from seed carried by birds.

If you are going to take out a tree, it is important to do it properly to reduce sprouting and recurrence because black cherry trees have a propensity to sprout from the cut stump and roots.

The quickest way to reduce or eliminate sprouting is to properly use herbicides that are labeled for controlling black cherry in pasture or fencerows. These herbicides are systemic, meaning they will travel throughout the plant and have the potential to kill all or a portion of the root system so that sprouting is reduced or eliminated.

You can apply herbicides in one of two methods - foliar spray or "cut stump" applications.

Many herbicides are labeled for foliage application of brush and trees if the trees are small enough to allow spray coverage of all or a large majority of the leaves. This technique involves spraying a diluted concentration of herbicide to cover the foliage.

Foliar applications work best after trees have fully leafed out until one or two weeks prior to leaf fall. The treated tree should remain in place until all the foliage has browned, ensuring that the herbicide has entered the root system. Check product labels for restrictions on pasturing and entry into treated areas. Generally, livestock should not be allowed access to areas where trees have been sprayed until the trees have been removed or wilting foliage is no longer present.

For larger trees, "cut stump" treatment is an effective method for preventing regrowth. Several herbicides, including some with glyphosate, triclopyr, and dicamba, are labeled for stump applications. After cutting the tree, immediately apply a concentrated herbicide solution to the fresh stump, following label directions. Timing is crucial—apply the herbicide within an hour to maximize effectiveness. If the stump has been cut for several weeks, recutting at least two inches down to expose fresh, live wood can improve absorption.

This method generally presents less environmental risk than foliar spraying, as it targets only the intended plant with minimal overspray or unintended exposure. However, caution is necessary in cases where root grafting could transfer herbicide to nearby cherry or ornamental trees. It is possible that the treated cherry trees may be root grafted to an adjacent black cherry or ornamental/cherry tree. Instances have been documented where a herbicide has moved from a treated tree to another of the same species or genera through a root graft. While this is not a high probability, in areas where other cherry trees are present, you should consider mechanical removal of the tree.

If you do not want to use herbicides, you can expect sprouting, and you'll probably have to cut several times to exhaust the food supply to the roots which could take several years.

For more information contact your Carter County Cooperative Extension Service. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

Upcoming Events:

- **Senior Farmer's Market Vouchers** – Call 474-6686 on May 28th to schedule an appointment to pick up your card. To register for a card you'll need to provide name, address, birthday, and income information.
- **Ag Advancement Council** – June 2nd @ 6:00 PM
- **Ag Development Board** – June 2nd @ 7:00 PM
- **Little Sandy Beekeepers Association** – June 3rd @ 6:30 PM; Topic – Making Chapstick from Beeswax; Speaker: Morgan Murphy
- **Hike & Learn** – June 6th in Rowan County. Visit carter.ca.uky.edu/events/hike-learn-13 for more information.