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As I drive through the valleys and hills around the county I notice that many hillsides are covered in bright yellow flowers of tarweed (*Holocarpha virgata*). From a distance, this California native annual weed is actually quite pretty with its cloak of yellow flowers adjacent to the golden yellow of the dried grasses. However, it can become a problem because it tends to have a sticky resin that coats legs of livestock and of humans. As well, it is not a plant that livestock will readily eat when mature and thus it reduces the productivity of rangelands late in the season. The plant is a winter annual with seed germination occurring in the fall with the first significant rain and continues through the following spring. The plants appear as a basal rosette in spring until the flower stems begin to elongate in late spring and early summer.

Controlling or managing tarweed is not difficult, but it does require persistence over time. The main management techniques rely on just reducing the density of the weed so that there are fewer plants to set seed. Timing of control techniques, however, is rather critical.

A non-herbicidal technique for control is mowing. Mowing the tarweed at critical times can reduce the density of plants in the following year. This mowing must be done prior to seed maturation and seed dispersal. Once the seeds have matured, mowing will just spread the seed around more. Mowing in late August and early September can reduce density by 90% or more the following year.

Herbicides, when applied in a timely manner during the spring are also effective. Herbicides containing 2,4-D should be applied prior to the end of April just before or during stem elongation. Applications later than that tend to be less effective. 2,4-D is a restricted material when purchased in larger quantities, however, homeowners can purchase dilute

formulations for home use without restriction. These are available over the counter as “Weed Be Gone” type products. Remember that you should read the label thoroughly before applying any chemical applications and follow all label directions.

For true eradication of tarweed from your property, you must be persistent in your efforts. A combination of annual mowing in late August to September, along with herbicide applications while the plant is in the rosette stage over at least a 5 year period will totally eradicate the weed. If control efforts are not consistently applied for at least 5 years, the weed will reinfest pastures once your eradication efforts are terminated. As well, after that period, it is a good idea to monitor for new infestations and eradicate them quickly before the tarweed goes to seed and spreads.