

Managing Ryegrass in Sugarcane
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As grinding begins, I'm sure one of the last things on your mind is controlling winter weeds. For the past few years, numerous producers have contacted me about the increasing quantity of ryegrass on their farm, and their failed attempts controlling it, with both pre- and postemergence herbicides.

Battling ryegrass begins with the application of preemergence herbicides, but timing can be tricky. In newly planted cane fields, germination of ryegrass typically begins in late-October or early-November, so targeting a preemergence herbicide application in the 3rd or 4th week of October is key.

Some growers have utilized metribuzin, atrazine, or diuron successfully to manage ryegrass prior to its emergence, and it is still a viable option for their operation. However, some growers have had efficacy issues over the last few years with metribuzin, atrazine, and diuron when applied in a timely fashion and with adequate activating rainfall. If you are in a situation where the previously mentioned herbicides have not provided the preemergence ryegrass control that you desired, Lumax EZ herbicide is another option. Lumax EZ was labeled for use in sugarcane in 2017 and it is a mixture of three active ingredients, one of which is extremely effective in controlling ryegrass. Lumax EZ also does an excellent job in controlling most other winter grass and broadleaf weeds. The rate for emerged cane is 1.5 to 3 qt/A, and it can be applied over-the-top without issue.

All preemergence herbicides need about a half-inch of rainfall to be moved into the soil solution and become activated. Rainfall events can be rare in October, but may occur with the passage of a cold front.

In situations where ryegrass becomes established in cane, the only postemergence herbicide option for management is paraquat. Beginning on November 14, 2019, all marketed paraquat products will have an amended new label. The new label requires successful completion of paraquat-specific training in order to purchase, handle, or apply paraquat products. This training is only offered online and can be accessed at www.usparaquattraining.com.

Remember to read and follow all herbicide labels. More information on sugarcane herbicide options can be found in the AgCenter's Weed Guide which is available online at http://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/communications/publications/management_guides.