Ruminations

Sendero® shines in more trials.

With another year of research, Sendero® herbicide continues to outshine the old standard tank mix. We call Sendero, “The new standard in mesquite control.”

At the introduction last year, we told you Sendero delivered better and more consistent control than the previous standard of Reclaim® herbicide tank-mixed with Remedy® Ultra herbicide.

More research now indicates it’s even a little better than we said.

The data shows Sendero increases control by about 17 percentage points more than the old standard mix.

And it has significantly decreased the variability of control, even during drought years.

It does all this without harm to native grasses. We tend to take that for granted, but not all new herbicides are so grass-friendly.

Understand, these are side-by-side comparisons of the two standards in the same year, same trials, rated two years after treatment.

In research plots sprayed in 2009 and 2010, Sendero posted rootkills of 60 percent to 93 percent. It averaged 77 percent. In the same trials, the old mix of Reclaim and Remedy Ultra had rootkills of 39 percent to 82 percent, and averaged 60 percent.

Try Sendero herbicide. You’ll like it.

Finally, I wish you all the best. This is my last “Ruminations” column as I’ve taken a new job in the company. I feel privileged to have been able to serve you. Thank you for all you do.

On the cover: Griffith Ranch, Skidmore, Texas.

Family joins mesquite fight from kerosene to Sendero.

Brothers Tommy and Gary Antilley easily recall their early experience in mesquite control. It’s part of a 70-year family legacy of ranch conservation.

Their father, Frank K. Antilley, dispatched them and his hired hand with a jeep and a 55-gallon drum of “coal oil” to basal treat any brush he saw.

“He’d say, ‘There are three over there — go get them,’” Gary chuckles. They went through barrels of basal solution that way.

Frank K. and his father, Frank H. Antilley, put together the family’s 3,800-acre ranch from 14 small farms near Wingate, Texas, in the early 1940s. Both cropland and rangeland had been overused and abused. But Frank K. proved himself an adept, committed conservationist, even being named the state’s Outstanding Conservation Rancher in 1965.

He stabilized eroding farmland and built a series of terraces, spreader dams and flood control structures to hold water on the ranch.

He mechanically cleared brushy rangeland and reseeded it with native grasses. He also established native grasses on the barren farmland. He developed water sources and cross-fenced pastures to manage grazing.

When brush came back, family members worked diligently to control it.

Family keeps up conservation

Eventually, the Antilley brothers left home for Texas A&M University and careers as county Extension agents. Their sister, Cindy Cathey, went to McMurry University and is now retired from a long teaching career. Frank K. died in 2004, but the family partnership — Tommy, Gary, Cindy and their mother, Marianne — continues to operate the ranch.

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steward the land and manage the brush.

The brothers, now retired from Extension, don’t basal spray mesquite anymore. But they use about every other method of brush control — hand-spraying leaves, mechanical grubbing and aerial broadcast. Most recently, they tried aerial application with the newest mesquite killer, Sendero® herbicide.

They control the brush for the same reasons their father did.

“Mesquite steals water from the grass,” Tommy says. And, as mesquite increases in density, cattle work gets more difficult, Gary adds. “Some pastures have gotten so bad, we couldn’t move cattle through them.”

Each method of control has its place, they say.

**Hand-spraying for maintenance**

Their preferred method of mesquite control is hand-spraying mesquite leaves from a four-wheeler. “We like to get them when they’re less than head-high,” Tommy says.

That removes mesquite before it robs significant moisture from the grass and before it becomes a physical obstacle. It’s quicker, cheaper and easy on the grass.

For several years, they’ve used the Texas A&M Brush Busters® mix of 0.5 percent Reclaim® herbicide with 0.5 percent Remedy® Ultra herbicide in water with 0.25 percent surfactant. Ingredients for a 14-gallon tankful cost them about $19, Tommy says, and they typically get 90 percent control.

After any mechanical or broadcast work in a pasture, the brothers try to go back in about three years and hand-treat any new sprouts.

**Mechanical for few big trees**

If mesquite gets taller than 8 feet, but remains scattered, the brothers turn to mechanical control.

Using a small bulldozer with a 32-inch gruber on the front, they grub out the bigger mesquites being careful to uproot the entire bud zone so it doesn’t resprout. The method tears up some grass cover, but it’s effective.

Finally, despite their best efforts, sometimes a mesquite population just gets away from them, the brothers admit. “If you don’t keep up with it, you’ll sure get behind,” Gary says.

“And that’s when we’ve aerially sprayed,” Tommy says. “It wasn’t economical for us to do mechanical.”

So in 2009 and 2010, the brothers had an aerial applicator spray for them. They applied the standard herbicide mix at the time: a labeled tank mix of Reclaim and Remedy Ultra at ¼ pound active ingredient each (1/3 pint Reclaim with 1/2 pint Remedy Ultra) per acre.

In seven years of research trials in the 1980s, the spray mix of Reclaim and Remedy Ultra posted rootkills of 35 percent to 87 percent. The brothers believe their results were at the top end of that range. “We had about perfect conditions,” Gary says.

**New herbicide trial**

But after the second application, Antilley Ranch still had dense mesquite elsewhere on the ranch. So, in 2011, approached by Dow AgroSciences sales representative Ralph Porter, the brothers agreed to cooperate in an early trial of a new herbicide. Dow AgroSciences introduced it the next year as Sendero herbicide, “The new standard in mesquite control.”

In July 2011, the Antilleys had 100 acres sprayed with Sendero at the labeled rate of 1.75 pints per acre.

One year after treatment, the treated mesquite rated 90 percent control. Researchers will peg final control with ratings two years after treatment.

In other research plots sprayed in 2009 and 2010, Sendero posted rootkills of 60 percent to 93 percent two years after treatment. It averaged 77 percent. In the same trials, the old mix of Reclaim and Remedy Ultra had rootkills of 39 percent to 82 percent, and averaged 60 percent.

**Oaks unharmed**

On their own place, the Antilley brothers noted not only the excellent mesquite control but also what the herbicide did not affect — oaks among the sprayed mesquite.

“We have some 100-year-old post oak, and we need some shade for cattle,” Gary says. “They never turned color after spraying over them.”

That observation is reinforced by other trials: Sendero has had little or no effect on oaks, elm and hackberry.

Safety to oaks is a nice fringe benefit, the brothers say.

“That’s the only shade we have,” Tommy says. “And everywhere we have mesquite, we have oaks.”

So, it seems, after 60 years, the Antilley brothers can add a new tool to their legacy of managing brush.

“It is a never-ending process,” Gary says. ■

On the Antilley Ranch, Sendero® herbicide left the oaks unhurt among the treated mesquite.