

Early spring-like weather accelerates ethephon seedhead control timing

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The abnormal – record-breaking – warm weather in late-February and early-March has accelerated growing degree day (GDD) accumulations. Applications of ethephon (Proxy, ENVU) are recommended in early spring to minimize seedhead development in annual bluegrass during early summer. The first application is recommended when GDDs exceed 220 (base 32F) with a follow-up application suggested 200 GDD (base 0C) after the first application. This second application usually is mixed with a Class A PGR like trinexapac-ethyl (Primo MAXX, Syngenta) or prohexadione-Ca (Anuew, Nufarm) while the first application is applied alone. Track your GDDs this spring with the Michigan State GDD Tracker at <https://gddtracker.msu.edu>.

The GDD accumulations in extreme southeast Nebraska are now within the first ethephon application window of 220 (base 32F). Much of southern and eastern Nebraska will be ready for their first apps this week. Far northern and western portions of the state will be ready for an initial application in Mid-March.

I confirmed this earlier than usual timing last week with Dr. Zac Reicher, ENVU Green Solutions Team Specialist, former UNL Professor, and Nebraska resident. While it's a couple of weeks earlier than usual, visible green-up of many bluegrass species suggest the application is warranted to help control problematic and unsightly seedheads at your golf course or sports field complex. Timing this



initial app is always tricky, but we would rather see it made earlier than later to maximize control. A second or maybe even third spring application of ethephon can sometimes be helpful. It would most likely be warranted if temperatures stay mild this spring, but the hot summer weather (>80F) is slow to arrive.

These later spring applications should also be made with a Class A PGR like Anuew or Primo MAXX. If annual bluegrass seedheads are a perennial nuisance to turf aesthetics and playability, or if you see a

visible decline in turfgrass health after the summer seedhead flush, we now recommend including an ethephon application with your fall snow mold fungicide application in November to maximize spring seedhead control. Research in Nebraska and across the country found this late-fall application dramatically increased seedhead control in the spring.

