When discussing weed control in perennial warm-season pastures, the focus is usually on warm-season broadleaf weeds, such as ragweed or broomweed, or warm-season grass weeds, such as sandbur or johnsongrass. However, cool-season weeds that emerge in the fall and grow in the winter and early spring are becoming more problematic in these fields.

One example is annual ryegrass. Ryegrass can be a valuable forage or a difficult weed, depending on your situation. It is generally considered a weed in summer forages in two scenarios. One is horse-quality hay production. If a producer is trying to bale horse-quality hay, and the buyers do not want ryegrass in the bale, ryegrass is definitely a weed in the first and possibly the second cutting. The other situation occurs when fields contain more ryegrass than livestock can consume. Ryegrass is very competitive with perennial summer grass in late April and May. When ryegrass dies, it forms a mat that can prevent sunlight from reaching the ground. This can shade out summer grass, particularly bermudagrass. I have seen quite a few stands of bermudagrass lost to excessive ryegrass competition.

The most effective way to control annual ryegrass in summer pastures is by mechanical methods, such as mowing or cultivation, or by chemical methods, such as herbicides.

Always read the label before handling, mixing or applying pesticides. Pay attention to safety information and follow all recommended safety practices.