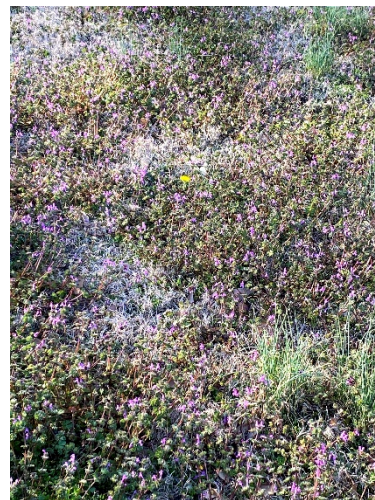


## Weed focus: Henbit

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Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule* L.), also known as henbit deadnettle, is a winter annual weed. It can become a problem in bermudagrass pastures, which are dormant during its growing season, if it is allowed to gain a foothold and reproduce. It is also found in disturbed areas and in overgrazed or thin pastures. It sprouts in early fall and grows during winter months. If you are seeing a sea of purple flowers in the early spring, you may have a henbit infestation (photo at right).



The henbit plant is often confused with purple/pink deadnettle and the plants do have similarities (photos at left). Both are members of the mint family and have square stems and are green to purplish in color. Henbit generally has dark, reddish stems and its

leaves are more broadly spaced on the stem than those of purple deadnettle. They are paired, tight against the stem, and alternate as they go up the stem (below, left). Henbit leaves are coarsely toothed and rounded. The flowers appear in whorls at the tops of the stems. They are purple and tubular (below, right). Henbit is generally glabrous, while deadnettle is hairy.



There is no known toxicity associated with henbit. Animals may eat it without concern and may select for it and other winter annuals because of their relatively high nutritive value. It can, however, choke out more desirable species and is not highly productive, so it should be kept under control.

Controlling henbit in pastures: Well managed pastures may not have henbit present; however, if a pasture develops a henbit infestation, chemical control is an option. Eradication may not be possible with 2,4-D alone; however, 2,4-D may be combined with dicamba or picloram to achieve effective control. Aminopyralid and metsulfuron will also do a good job of controlling henbit. These herbicides must be applied with the plants are small or they will lose their effectiveness. Mowing is less effective with henbit than with some other weed species because it grows low to the ground. Plants may not be damaged enough by mowing to prevent flowering and seed set. Grazing can help, as long as the livestock consume the henbit before it sets seed.

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