

**The Extension Cord**  
“*Connecting K-State to the Community*”  
by Mark Ploger  
Pratt County Extension Agricultural Agent

**Little Barley in Lawns**

This time of year, we often get questions about the grass that looks like *little foxtail* in the lawn. What it actually is called is little barley. Many people mistake little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) for a little foxtail because the foxtail and little barley seedheads are similar. However, little barley is a winter annual that comes up in late September - October and spends the winter as a small plant. It thrives in the cooler spring temperatures, forms seed heads and dies out usually by July. Foxtail, on the other hand, is a summer annual that does well in hot weather. Also, foxtail will not produce seedheads until mid- to late-summer.

So, why are we talking about little barley now? Because now is NOT the time to control it unless it is in an area where a non-selective herbicide that kills everything such as glyphosate (Roundup) can be used. The best control for little barley in turf is a thick lawn that is mowed high enough that sunlight does not hit the soil. Little barley seed will not germinate in such conditions.

Overseeding in early September can thicken up a tall fescue lawn and prevent a little barley infestation. However, if you do not plan to overseed even though the lawn is a bit thin, preemergence herbicides can be used to provide at least partial control of this weed. The only preemergence herbicide that is labeled specifically for little barley is Surflan. It is also sold under the name of Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden.

Surflan can only be used on warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass) and tall fescue grown in warm-season areas such as Kansas. However, Dimension (dithiopyr), is labeled for barley (*Hordeum* spp.) which would include little barley and therefore can be used to keep this weed under control. Because little barley is a winter annual, apply the preemergence herbicide about mid-September and water in to activate. If overseeding, do not apply any pre-emergence herbicide as it will interfere with the germination of tall fescue.