



Since 1894

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Senator Dan Kerschen, Chair

From: Mike Beam, Sr. Vice President

Re: **Support for Senate Bill 117, adding the wild blackberry to the county option noxious weed list**

Date: February 13, 2017

*The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing over 5,300 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry, including seedstock, cow-calf and stocker production, cattle feeding, dairy production, grazing land management and diversified farming operations.*

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) supports Senate Bill No. 117, which simply amends the noxious weed law to allow counties to designate the "wild blackberry" plant as a noxious weed within their jurisdiction.

You may recall we asked this committee for the introduction of this bill. I must first note we provided inaccurate information to the Revisor of Statutes staff regarding the scientific name for the invasive, vigorous wild blackberry plant that's intended to be targeted with this legislation. The bill as it exists refers to the *Rubera genera*, which we now understand is a broad category that may include all native and cultivated species of blackberry. Kansas Department of Agricultural staff and University of Kansas faculty have suggested the bill be amended to refine the name to "**everbearing blackberry (Rubus serissimus) and himalayan blackberry (Rubus armeniacus).**"

We suggest the wild blackberry is a prime example of an invasive plant that causes economic and ecological concerns in some areas of Kansas, but of little concern in most regions of the state. Our members in the tallgrass prairie region of Kansas are troubled by the presence and spread of this plant and have suggested it is an invasive that merits a noxious weed designation.

The thorns on this plant are very prickly and destructive. It's not safe for man, livestock and larger species of wildlife to pass through an area where these plants exist.

In addition, wild blackberry brambles can become so thick that it will shade out and out-compete other plants for light, water and nutrients.

According to a University of California integrated pest management bulletin, vining wild blackberry plants “can host Pierce’s disease (harmful to grapevines) and serve as a vector to movement of the pathogen to other agricultural and nonagricultural areas, including riparian sites.”

Furthermore, this publication claims “Another undesirable aspect of vining blackberry plants is they are a good source of food and shelter for rats.”

Attached to my statement is a photo of a small area of wild blackberry brambles, taken a few weeks after a spring burn last spring. You’ll see the surface area on the ground is sparse of other native plant cover.

Unfortunately, prescribed burning...by itself...will not control this plant. These plants are able to regenerate following mowing, burning and often herbicide treatment. It appears that it takes a combination of mechanical and chemical control. Spot spraying at the right time, following a burn (repeated in subsequent years) seems to be the most effective manner to control this species.

As mentioned earlier, this plant is not a significant concern in many areas of Kansas. As Daniel Mushrush has stated in his letter, this plant can be a menace and threat to the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. It seems logical to us that this plant should be added to the county option list and we urge this committee to give SB 117 favorable consideration.

Thank you!

Attachment to SB 117 testimony of Kansas Livestock Association

02.13.17



Wild blackberry brambles in Chase County native grass pasture after prescribed burn in 2016