

October 22, 2015

**Statement to the
Special Committee on Natural Resources
Regarding Senate Bill 134**

By William Browning
Madison, Kansas

I am a Flint Hills rancher. The family ranch that I manage is 25 miles southwest of Emporia, and is in Greenwood and Chase counties. My experience there prompts me to recommend that the committee include the old world bluestems (specifically Caucasian bluestem and Yellow bluestem) in the noxious weed category.

This very persistent plague first appeared on our land 35 years ago as an unanticipated impurity in a native grass seed mix that we drilled into an old field. I have been fighting it every since, while watching it spread to other pastures, ours and our neighbors'. Old world bluestems produce monocultures in our prairies, crowding out native species, even producing a toxin that discourages our indigenous plants. In well-managed native prairie pastures old world bluestems are frequently ungrazed, as the cattle prefer native grasses which are more nutritious and, more importantly, produce much better weight gains than the Eurasian invaders.

Although K-State is working to assist ranchers in our struggle against this invader, no silver bullet has appeared. Meanwhile it is rapidly spreading, especially along roadsides where highway mowing operations are a vector in the movement of the seed. A most obvious place to observe this is along a 40-mile stretch of Highway 54 from Iola to Rosalia. I have made note of an extensive haying operation in the state-owned roadside area six or eight miles west of Eureka. This hay will be infested with old world bluestem seed, and wherever it is fed to cattle, the metastasis of this exotic will occur. This practice must be stopped. It can be seen spreading from the Highway 54 right-of-way to adjacent pastures at dozens of locations. For these reasons, on behalf of thousands of Kansas native range managers, I ask that you strive to have old world bluestems included on the noxious species list.

Attachment 17
SCANR 10-22-15