For this week’s article I’d like to highlight a weed problem I’ve noticed in lawns all over the county, including my own! You may be noticing in thin spots in your yard, or even along driveways and sidewalks, there is a grassy weed that is starting to turn brown. The weed we are looking at is known as Little Barley. It’s easily identified by its seed head. You may think it looks like really tiny wheat heads and when you pull the seed head apart, you are likely to see each seed has 3 points or awns (google “little barley” for images). Little Barley is considered a winter annual and will germinate and start growing in the fall and by spring time it quickly develops the seed head and dies in early summer. The seed heads can be a nuisance as they can work their way into your socks but they are even worse on pets. The little seeds can work their way into the pads of your pet’s feet causing discomfort, sores, and bleeding.

Unfortunately, there is not much that can be done at this point to control it, the weed is pretty much at the end of its lifecycle for this year so any type of herbicide application would not be recommended. The best way to keep Little Barley under control is to never let it get started and you can do that by having a thick healthy lawn. To achieve this, you can over-seed the thin spots, mow tall, and have a good fertility program. Some crabgrass preventers are labeled and effective for controlling Little Barley, but make sure the product label states it is for Little Barley or it may just say “Barley” or “Barley species”. Since Little Barley is a winter annual, you will want to apply the herbicide in late August or early September before the weed starts to germinate. Do not apply the herbicide if you plan on reseeding those spots this fall. As always, if you have any questions please feel free to reach out to our office at 785-263-2001.