

December 19, 2019

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Livestock and Natural Resources

No news from Jody this week.

David G. Hallauer
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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Farm Bill Meetings – Save the Dates

With signup for 2018 Farm Bill elections coming in early 2020 (enrollment ends March 15th), it's time to finalize a decision between the ARC and PLC programs. To help answer your questions about the options, a series of Farm Bill informational meetings are being finalized. Meetings will be held in Holton on January 14th, Seneca on the 15th, and Oskaloosa on the 16th. Times and locations are being confirmed. Look for more information in this column or check online at www.meadowlark.k-state.edu under the Crops & Soils Link. Information will also be available after January 1 from your local FSA Office.

A Time and Place for Dormant Oils

If you're like most homeowners, you get a little weary of trying to keep up with insect pests through the growing season. If that's the case for you, consider a dormant oil application.

Dormant oils are applied during winter to kill insect and mite pests overwintering as eggs or mature females. They can be applied now, potentially reducing costs associated with pesticide inputs applied later in the growing season. They have a wide range of activity against the life stages of mite and scale pests—even the eggs. They are often less harmful to beneficial insects and predatory mites that aren't present right now. Plus, they have relatively low toxicity to humans and other mammals. There are a few considerations, however.

First, they can cause plant injury. Applying in winter helps with that, but certain species and temperatures might be an issue. Some plants (arborvitae, Colorado blue spruce, redbud, and certain maples, for example) may be harmed by dormant oil sprays. Problems associated with this phytotoxicity are generally associated with higher rates or bad timing (apply in late November through February) so check labels before application). One label requirements is generally temperature. Never apply dormant oils when ambient air temperatures are going to drop below 40 degrees for at least 24 hours. Avoid application to stressed plants as well.

Second, they don't last season long. Dormant oil applications are primarily directed at killing overwintering life stages of certain mites and scales, before they become active in the spring and feed on plants. They are contact products, killing by suffocation or by direct disruption of cell membranes. Once residues dissipate, they will have minimal activity. Thorough coverage of all plant parts is important.

Third, they aren't effective on all insects. Two-spotted spider mites won't be controlled since the female overwinters in plant debris, mulch, etc... Spruce spider mites will be controlled, however, as will euonymus scale, even though some other scales will not.

Bottom line: a dormant oil application may not cure all insect pressure, but they can do a lot to help. Along the way, you might reduce insecticide/miticide applications while preserving the natural enemies of mites and scales that may naturally regulate populations of these pests.

As a Season Draws to a Close – Merry Christmas

Most of my work happens in accordance with growing seasons. Weather the last few weeks have pretty well ended the 2019 growing season, providing a minute to take a break as we look ahead to 2020. For all of you who have provided so many opportunities for interaction during the past year – thank you! It is a great pleasure to work with you, and I look forward to doing so again in 2020. Enjoy a brief breather and a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Reduce the Hassle of Holiday Food Prep

Are you hosting a holiday meal? Do you wish you could spend more time with your guests and less time in the kitchen? Last minute hurried food preparations can drain any cook's holiday spirit. Try these ideas from K-State's Dining on a Dime newsletter to help you take some of the hassle out of your holidays, while keeping food quality and food safety a top priority.

Fruits and Vegetables

*Assemble vegetable casseroles a day in advance, cover and refrigerate. Bake on the day of your dinner, planning for 15 to 20 minutes extra heating time. Heat until they're hot and steaming throughout.

*Cut washed fruits and vegetables within a day of your meal for salads and relish trays. Keep cut fruits from turning brown by coating them with lemon, orange or pineapple juice, or a commercial anti-darkening preparation. Cover and store them in the refrigerator above raw meats and below cooked items.

Protein Foods

*Purchase fresh raw meat, poultry or seafood no more than 1 to 2 days before your holiday meal. Freeze for longer storage.

*If you have frozen meat, poultry or seafood, place it on a tray on the lowest shelf in the refrigerator and allow approximately 24 hours for each 5 pounds of weight for it to thaw.

*If you cook meat, poultry or seafood the day before your meal, refrigerate it in small portions in shallow pans within 2 hours of cooking. You can place loosely covered foods in the refrigerator while they're still warm. Cover them tightly when completely cooled. On the day of your meal, reheat until hot and steaming, to 165 degrees F. as measured with a food thermometer.

Baked Goods

*Almost all types of cookies, cakes, breads and muffins can be baked in advance and frozen for up to 2 months. Avoid freezing cakes with whipped cream or other soft fillings, since this will result in a soggy cake upon thawing.

*Cool baked goods completely before storing them in airtight, moisture-proof containers.

*Thaw cheesecake in the refrigerator, covered, where it will remain fresh for up to seven days.

Thaw non-perishable baked goods at room temperature in their freezer container to prevent them from drying out.

All Perishable Foods

Avoid leaving perishable foods (such as meats, fish, poultry, eggs, cooked dry beans, dairy products, and cut fruit and vegetables) at room temperature for more than two hours. This includes the total time for preparation and serving.

Hosting family and friends at holiday meals doesn't have to be exhausting. Planning ahead and taking time to do some advance preparation are keys to creating more time to enjoy your party and your guests.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Smaller Portions, Exercise Can Help

It's a good idea to slow down and focus on enjoying friends and family during the holidays. Eating too much food can often take away from being able to do that.

Holidays seem to be a time when we go on auto-pilot, and we like to eat most of the foods that are there and available. I think one reason we do that is because it's the holidays; this is not food we traditionally eat throughout the year.

When you are in the 'Season of Feasting' and you want to sample everything in front of you, just take small amounts of it. It's okay. You won't offend anyone. It's okay to take just a tablespoon or so.

Start with your favorite foods first: That's when you're probably most hungry and food tastes the best. You can satisfy your hunger and enjoy your favorite foods.

Eating too much often leads to needing rest, which takes away from the reason for getting together. You want to be able to enjoy people, but if you over-stuff yourself, you probably just want to be left alone because you need your stomach to settle down.

Make time for exercise like going on a family walk. Do something that your body will thank you for.

If you can turn your holiday gatherings into enjoying the people around you and not so much focus on the food itself, you'll find that others won't even notice and if they do they might take your lead.