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District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

Hay and Water

It's that time of year, time to make hay while the sun shines! Hopefully, we will have some nice warm weather with a breeze and low humidity. We get a lot of calls on Custom rates, what is the going rate for swathing, raking, baling and hauling hay.

There are so many variables in Custom Rates. You can find the latest version of Kansas Custom rates on the Ag Economics website, www.agmanager.info. The latest version was 2018 and some of the reports for Northeast Kansas are blank, because no one reported.

We do have copies available at the Extension office, you can stop by, knock on the door and we will get you a copy.

I have been doing a lot of work with farm ponds and Blue/Green algae lately. Blue/Green algae is not our only concern with farm ponds.

Surface water supplies to which livestock have ready access are always potential candidates for contamination. Shallow dug wells without good surface drainage away from the well may be subject to infiltration of contaminants. The presence of coliform bacteria in a well is an indication that surface water is finding its way into the well. In karst topography, sink holes, losing streams and porous soils may allow direct contamination of fractured rock aquifers.

Water can serve as a reservoir for many different disease organisms and toxins. Stagnant water contaminated with manure or other nutrients may develop blue-green algae, which can poison livestock, causing muscle tremors, liver damage, and death. Farm pond water needs to be observed for the presence of algae and other harmful organisms during hot, dry weather.

Leptospirosis and Fusobacterium are two bacterial contaminants that often use water and mud, respectively, as modes of transportation from animal to animal. Leptospirosis is spread through urine of carrier animals. This disease often manifests itself as reproductive problems. Problems may range from infertility, to low milk production, to widespread late-term abortion. The organism can survive for extended periods of time in surface waters. One should take care to avoid forcing livestock to drink from water sources that may be contaminated with urine.

Fusobacterium infection is more commonly known as "foot-rot." The bacterium is a soil-borne organism found virtually throughout the United States. It is carried on the feet of animals, which then serve to contaminate any body of water they enter. The bacteria then enter through cuts, bruises, or puncture wounds on damaged feet of other animals. Once inside an animal's body, they multiply rapidly and serve to spread the disease. Clinical signs of "foot-rot" are most commonly seen as chronic lameness, often with swelling above the foot. "Foot-rot" can usually be effectively treated with penicillin and sulfa.

When water is suspected of causing health problems in livestock, veterinary assistance should be sought to determine the actual disease. Laboratory diagnostic examination of animals as well as the water supply may be necessary to evaluate the problem. Temporarily changing to a known safe water supply is a useful test to determine whether the health problems can be solved.

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
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Considering Plant Analysis

The past few weeks have seen corn transition from a slow start to rapid growth. Along the way, there may have been issues you noticed that caused you to question what might be going on. To help solve some of these issues – or maybe just as a ‘quality control’ tool, you might want to consider tissue testing.

For diagnostic purposes, sample any time. If plants are 12 inches or less in height, cut the plant off at ground level and submit the whole thing. If plants are greater than 12 inches in height, collect the top fully developed leaf – the one with a leaf collar. Collect from both the good and bad areas for comparison purposes.

Monitoring for nutrient levels is typically done at the beginning of reproductive growth. At that time, collect the ear leaf (the one located below the uppermost developing ear) from random areas of the field. Avoid sampling under stress conditions when nutrient uptake may be limited by factors other than nutrient deficiencies.

Allow collected leaves to wilt overnight to remove excess moisture. Place in a paper bag or mailing envelope and ship to the lab for analysis. Avoid plastic bags or tightly sealed containers that can cause decomposition. Most of the soil testing labs in the region provide plant analysis services, including the K-State Soil Testing Lab.

For more information on tissue testing and sufficiency ranges, drop me a line at any of our Meadowlark Extension District Offices or e-mail me at dhallaue@ksu.edu.

Fertilizing Tomatoes

If a little is good, a lot is better, right? Not so much when it comes to tomato fertilization. In fact, too much nitrogen can result in large plants with little to no fruit.

Instead of more nitrogen as a whole, instead spread out nitrogen applications, fertilizing three different times during the season.

The first sidedressing should go on one to two weeks before the first tomato ripens. Apply the second shot two weeks after the first tomato ripens. Do the third application one month after the second.

Common sources of nitrogen-only fertilizers include nitrate of soda, urea, and ammonium sulfate. Blood meal is an organic fertilizer that contains primarily, but not exclusively, nitrogen. Use only one of the listed fertilizers and apply at the rate given below:

Nitrate of soda (16-0-0): Apply 2/3 pound (1.5 cups) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

Blood Meal (12-1.5-.6): Apply 14 ounces (1.75 cups) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

Urea (46-0-0): Apply 4 ounces (½ cup) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

Ammonium Sulfate (21-0-0): Apply 0.5 pounds (1 cup) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

If you cannot find the above materials, you can use a lawn fertilizer that is about 30 percent nitrogen (nitrogen is the first number in the set of three) and apply it at the rate of 1/3 pound (¾ cup) per 30 feet of row. Do not use a fertilizer that contains a weed killer or weed preventer.

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

Use Your Vacation Days to Reset

Some of us are starting our fourth month of our disrupted work environment and summer officially starts this month. Many may be asking how to take a vacation when you are already working from home or maybe you are the only one in the office.

Summer looks different this year for everyone including work life, school life, and home life. However, it is still important to take an official break from your routine. Everyone needs a break from the continuous demands of work to let your mind and body reset.

How do you know you might need a break and what might that break look like if you have been working from a flex-site? Signs you need a break:

- *Your having trouble sleeping.
- *Your personal life is suffering.
- *You're starting to make more mistakes at work.
- *You're no longer enthusiastic about your work.
- *You've lost your sense of humor.
- *Molehills routinely become mountains.
- *Your work site is either completely messy or totally organized.

Best practices to take a vacation from your flex-site office:

- *Turn on your out of office reply and let others know you are not available, when you
Will return and who to contact in case of an emergency.
- *Do not go into the office whether it is across town or in the next room.
- *If you are working from home close the door to the room or throw a blanket over the
Space!!
- *Resist the urge to check email and join in "just that one" Zoom meeting!
- *Focus on the leisure things you enjoy doing.
- *Make plans with family, friends, and pets to do something special, whether your
Vacation is a destination or a staycation.

While making this decision, take time to consider what you have been through and what you will need going forward. Do not underestimate the power of giving yourself the space to rest. This might not be the vacation you had envisioned in January but you can still have a break from work, wherever your flex-work site is.

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Strengthen Connections with Handwritten Notes

Who you spend your time with is an important thing. Today's relationships are built around convenience. We send a quick text or email, speak with others on the phone or make a social media post.

Most people love to receive notes, cards and letters. Handwritten letter writing has become something of the past. But a handwritten note shows that someone gave of their time to think of us and makes the person on the receiving end feel special.

Now more than ever people are longing to spend time with each other. Building relationships from a distance is more challenging but certainly not impossible. Carve out a time each week to write a card or note to one person. This will create a wonderful habit of showing gratitude for someone every week. Once you start it might be something you choose to do more.

The benefits of writing letters: You'll make someone happy. The receiver of your letter is going to get a burst of excitement and know that you care. Handwriting stimulates creativity and encourages you to explore.

It promotes mindfulness. Just like coloring creates calmness and relieves anxiety, so too does handwriting. Handwriting makes you more conscious and attentive. It engages you in a single task.

We live in a distracted world and relationships can be taken for granted. Letter writing is a way to stay connected and show someone you care. Handwritten communication helps us prioritize what matters in life – who we make time for.