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District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

Pond Project

I've been working with Kansas Dept. of Health Environment, Bureau of Water, and the KSU Vet Diagnostic Lab and our Water Quality Specialist to look at some Blue/Green Algae research. For years we've read about using Barley straw in ponds to help with the algae bloom. The problem was, this literature was in other countries or urban areas. We just didn't know if it really works.

Last fall, a bunch of us gathered to discuss Blue/Green algae, to understand why it seems to be more prevalent. What we thought we know, may not be the case. We discussed all the other "treatments" like dye, shade balls, copper sulfate, hydrogen peroxide, and many others. After an hour of discussion, I was more depressed than ever. I turned to the veterinarians at the table and asked if there was some sort of preventable measure we could feed the cattle, so they could tolerate the toxins. I was told this is like cobra venom.

We struggled to find a research project that was doable and affordable. After a big find of barley straw in Western Kansas, we were in business to try out the barley bales ourselves, in Kansas in real water bodies and farm ponds.

So at this writing, the bales have been installed in 6 ponds, Gage Park, and the Melvern Lake swim pond. As the bales disintegrate, they release two chemicals, hydrogen peroxide and another. These chemicals are believed to hinder, depress, and prevent some of the Blue/green algae. We don't think it is a cure, but it may be a step in the right direction.

KDHE is excited to be working with Shawnee County, the Corps of Engineers, and Kansas State University Research and Extension.

The ponds will be tested monthly to see the level of nutrients and if there have been any harmful algae blooms.

The small square bales of barley straw were halfway submerged in the ponds and staked in place. As one of them explained, it can be like trying to drown your enemy. Some of them put up more of a fight than others.

I can personally attest that rubber waders are very hot, even in the water! Mucking around in the mud, lugging around straw bales and sledgehammer, it was definitely a workout.

The barley bales are all gone, but if you are interested in the project, you can contact me for more details. Our western Kansas farmer is looking forward to this year's crop!

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Pesticide Labels

If you've ever read this column to the end, you may have noted this statement: always read and follow label directions. It's a reminder that anyone applying a pesticide has a responsibility to make sure they are doing so according to current label guidelines.

The importance of staying abreast of label rules and regulations can often be overlooked in our haste to get unwanted vegetation cleaned up or take care of the disease overtaking our tomatoes. Sifting through the label to find the correct rate or volume of water or appropriate carrier can be more time than we want to take. Still, the label is the law – and for good reason.

Inappropriate pesticide use has ramifications far beyond poor control of the pest in question. It can lead to diminished plant growth and production. Off label applications can result in products that are unusable according to the label, even as they look just fine.

The wrong rate at the wrong growth/life stage or using the old saying 'if a little is good, then a lot will be better' can result in weed, disease, and insect resistance that, while unintended, may reduce further the arsenal of products available for control.

With that in mind: always read and follow label directions. Whether you are using an insecticide for bagworms or spraying pigweeds in soybeans, the label is designed to protect the crop to which it is applied – and the applicator that applies it.

Bagworms have Hatched

The 2020 bagworm hatch has begun. If you are going to be implementing a control program, now is the time to get ready. Insecticides should be applied when bagworm larvae are an eighth to a quarter-inch long

Eggs will be hatching over several weeks. With last year's high numbers, it is likely that repeat applications will be necessary. To determine if additional insecticide applications are needed, check plants for live bags that look like small cones, about the size of a pencil lead.

Many insecticide products are effective on bagworms. Read the label and look for bagworms under pests controlled, and then the species you are spraying to make sure it is safe. Thorough coverage of plant foliage increases effectiveness. That means timing sprays for application in the morning or evening when larvae are most active. It also means spraying ample volumes with good coverage of the tree from top to bottom and from the outer branches to inner branches as well. Once bagworms reach an inch or greater in length, thick bags won't be penetrated by the insecticide, and their feeding declines, further reducing pesticide exposure.

For a list of products, feel free to contact your local Meadowlark Extension District office or e-mail me at dhallaue@ksu.edu .

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

Sharpening Financial Survival Skills is More Important Than Ever

Some say, “when the going gets tough, the tough gets going,” and the going is tough right now for millions of Americans from the economic fallout sparked by COVID-19. But even for the toughest among us, it’s not easy to pick up the pieces, especially after a job or business loss.

Many of the people who are now going to food pantries and seeking assistance have never had to rely on it before. It has been a shock to many of them to lose their income, almost overnight.

Sometimes it’s helpful to put pen to paper or fingers to computer-and take steps to sharpen your survival skills. Remember the motto, use your resources, so they do the best. Some resources will be used to buy goods and services you use or consume. Other resources may be invested in retaining, job searches, or other future needs.

There is a fact sheet called Sharpening Survival Skills (<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3501.pdf>). The information is part of the series of fact sheets focused on helping individuals and families through difficult financial times.

Some steps include:

- *Plan how to use your resources. Identify what you need and separate needs from wants.
- *Substitute costlier goods and services for less costly where possible. Is walking an option rather than driving? Store brands versus name brands? Borrow or rent seldom-used equipment rather than buying. Substitute actions for gifts---lawn mowing for child care or vice versa?
- *Find new uses for resources you already have.
- *Conserve resources through wise use. Consolidate trips—get the most use from each time you take a trip out in the car. Wait until you have a full load to do laundry.
- *Cooperate with others to stretch resources. Organize food, housing, or childcare cooperatives and carpools. Sell unwanted or unused items.
- *Take advantage of available community resources. Examples are Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), health insurance through the Affordable Care Act and Kansas Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).

More information limited to the series of fact sheets, *When Your Income Drops* is available on the K-State Research and Extension webpage (<https://www.k-state.edu/family-finances/whenyourincomedrops.html>). Kansans are also encouraged to contact their local extension office. In the Meadowlark District, those offices are located at Seneca-785-336-2184; Oskaloosa-785-863-2212 or Holton-785-364-4125.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Caring for Younger Children

The K-State Research & Extension series, *Suddenly in Charge*, has recently added tip sheets that outline recommendations for reading with children for indoor fun and physical activity to fill outdoor time.

“Children enjoy having older kids or adults read to them. Some tips to keep in mind for a positive experience include: Read where there is good lighting. Choose age-appropriate books and read creatively. Act out the story and use silly voices. Involve children in the story. Let them pick a book and tell the story. More details are in the publication, *Suddenly in Charge: Reading with Young Children*.

Another new publication is *Suddenly in Charge: Physical Activity*. Youth between the ages of 6 and 17 need at least 60 minutes of exercise daily, either through short bursts of activity throughout the day, or all at once. Children ages 2 to 5 should engage in small bursts of active play and activities every day.

Some tips for adults and older children to take into consideration include: Consider any safety risks that may be present before physical activity, such as unsafe equipment or other hazards. Apply sunscreen before outdoor play and keep children hydrated by offering regular water breaks. Before riding a bicycle, scooter, or roller skates, make sure the child is wearing a properly fitting helmet.

Never leave children unattended near water, even around small pools. For youth who may be babysitting, talk with the child’s guardians about their rules on playing in or around water and the safety equipment their child should wear.

Both publications provide activities and fun snacks to build around reading time or to incorporate with physical activity. They can be found on the website www.ksre.k-state.edu/families/suddenly-in-charge/. There are also tip sheets on food, animal care, and safety, social media safety, mental health and wellness, and additional topics.