K-STATE Research and Extension | Meadowlark District

March 27 2020

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No evidence that livestock can transmit COVID-19 to humans

There's been jokes and speculations about pets and livestock getting Covid 19, here's the official word from the experts!

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The director of a Kansas State University veterinary laboratory that responds to animal health issues across the state says that while coronavirus is a disease familiar to livestock producers, it is not the same strain of the virus that is grabbing headlines across the globe.

The novel strain of coronavirus, COVID-19, is transmitted through humans. There is no evidence that livestock can transmit the disease to humans, and the food products from livestock cannot carry COVID-19 to humans.

"Producers are well aware that there is a (different strain of) coronavirus that is associated with neo-natal diarrhea, and there's another one that we think is now associated with cattle respiratory disease," said Gregg Hanzlicek, director of the production animal field investigations unit in K-State's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

But I want to make it perfectly clear that our cattle coronavirus has no relationship to the coronavirus that is currently circulating in humans. These coronaviruses are very species-specific. There is absolutely no indication that livestock can be carriers of COVID-19 and be a source of infection to humans, either through carrying it on their skin or their hair or anywhere else."

He added: "Milk, eggs, beef,pork…whatever proteins that are produced by livestock are absolutely safe to eat. People do not have to worry about those products carrying COVID-19 to the population."

Hanzlicek said that producers are safe to go about the business of taking care of animals: "They need to minimize the amount of exposure they have to humans. At this point, they should keep on doing what they do every day with their livestock."

Livestock producers who think they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should see their medical professional. If their livestock begin showing signs of illness, as well, Hanzlicek said they should contact their local veterinarian.

"The local vet will call the state or federal veterinarian and then a decision will be made whether to test those animals for COVID-19," Hanzlicek said. "We don't want to just start blanket sampling all animals. Again, with this virus, we do not believe that livestock are associated with spreading the disease."

Hanzlicek said that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has relaxed its rules just a bit to allow producers to consult with a veterinarian through 'tele-medicine' – that is, communicating sickness to a veterinarian by phone or online technology.

"The veterinarian is not necessarily required to make a trip to actually look at the animals," thus maintain 'social distance' guidelines for humans, Hanzlicek said.

The K-State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, which tests samples for suspected livestock disease, remains open during the university's limited operations status. Hanzlicek said the lab is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday.

Hanzlicek and others also are still available to travel throughout Kansas to help local veterinarians diagnose suspected livestock disease. The staff can be contacted by calling 785-532-5650, or through its web site, www.ksvdl.org.

Hanzlicek said the FDA also maintains a useful site with information for livestock owners regarding COVID-19.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this article
K-State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, www.ksvdl.org

FDA, COVID-19, http://www.FDA.gov/coronavirus

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Herbicide Evaluations

The University of Tennessee recently published results of a 2019 herbicide evaluation of palmer amaranth population susceptibilities to dicamba. One set of populations was from seed collected years ago and susceptible to dicamba. Other populations were from farms that experienced 2019 weed control issues at levels not seen in the past.

If interested in the full results, drop me a line and I'll send it to you. The short story is this: 1) three fourths of the populations saw great control from dicamba. It's still a good active ingredient. 2) Even under ideal application conditions, there were populations that saw less than 90 percent control – leaving five to ten percent of the population to survive. It's concerning, particularly since these were greenhouse evaluations where efficacy rates are generally superior to those seen in the field. 3) When reduced product rates were applied, populations never exposed to dicamba saw good control levels. Populations exposed to dicamba in 2019 saw drastically reduced control. This suggests that palmer amaranth has seen an increase in dicamba tolerance over (a short) time and underscores the need for following label rates.

To some, this work suggests that dicamba isn't working. Maybe in some cases, but a likely larger problem is overuse of a single product or reliance on a single group of herbicides. That type of overuse continues to 'steal' good products from our weed control arsenal.

If you haven't looked at the new products on the market, check them out to see what they have to offer and whether they can add diversity to your current program. KSU Extension Weed Scientist Dr. Sarah Lancaster recently compiled a list of the newer products for a KSU eUpdate article at https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/article/update-on-new-herbicides-for-kansas-crops-in-2020-377-2 . Four of the products have soybean labels that could apply in our area.

NOTE: while palmer amaranth is not the same as our more common waterhemp, it is not uncommon for related weeds to exhibit similar response issues. Product labels supersede information compiled in the aforementioned article. *Always* read and follow label directions.

Proper Timing for Crabgrass Preventers

Crabgrass preventers are preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. With few exceptions, they have no effect on existing crabgrass plants, so they must be applied prior to germination. They often don't last all season, either, meaning timing of application is important.

Most crabgrass begins to germinate in early May, making April 15th a good preventer application target date. You can also apply at full bloom of the Eastern Redbud tree. For most products, initiate a second application in eight weeks.

What if you miss the application window? Two products – dithiopyr and prodiamine can both be applied prior to April 15 and still exhibit sufficient season long residual strength. Dithiopyr may even have some efficacy on crabgrass up to the two- to three-leaf stage.

Note: Always read and follow product labels. If possible, apply crabgrass preventers *before* fertilizer to prevent excessive early turf growth. Avoid application to newly seeded lawns unless allowed by product label.

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Food, Nutrition, Health and Safety

What is Social Distancing? (Part 2)

How does Social Distancing Help During a Pandemic? A 2010 study published in BioMed Central (BMCC) Public Health assessed whether social distancing is affective in slowing or reducing the transmission of influenza. So while social distancing may be an important factor in preventing the spread of coronavirus, practicing good hygiene and taking other safety precautions may also be important steps in preventing the spread.

It's important to remember that you may need a combination of safety methods in place to fight the spread of the disease as effectively as possible.

Flattening the curve. You may have seen references in the news or on social media to the need to "flatten the curve" through social distancing. When new cases spike very quickly, hospitals and other medical facilities can be overwhelmed and unable to adequately treat everyone---including patients who are not actually dealing with the coronavirus. Such spikes are more likely when social distancing measures are not enacted quickly and early enough.

By slowing the number of new cases and stretching them out over a longer period of time---or "flattening the curve" of new cases---we can keep the number of total cases (and the number of high-risk cases) below the threshold so that our hospitals have enough space and resources to operate as smoothly as possible during this difficult time.

How to social distance in your own life. The most obvious way to practice social distancing is to avoid crowded public places where close contact with others may occur. These might include movie theaters, religious gatherings, and crowded restaurants. Of course, it's not always easy to practice social distancing.

Some tips and tricks—opt for online meetings rather than workplace gatherings whenever possible. Work from home if you can. Order groceries from a delivery service. Shop online rather than in stores.

What to do if you live alone. If you live alone, social-distancing may be easier for you in many ways. You won't be exposed to as many people if you don't have other family members coming and going. Yet it can also present some challenges for you.

You may need to ensure that you're not becoming too isolated. Loneliness and depression can become real problems if you don't interact with others. So if you've started working from home, avoiding social gatherings, and you're not going out as much, then make sure to monitor your mental health.

Check in with friends and family regularly so you can keep some social contact with others. Speak with them on the phone, text throughout the day, or set up video calls to ensure that you aren't getting too isolated.

Social distancing isn't just something you should practice during a pandemic. It's something you may want to do any time your immune system is compromised.

You might also practice it if there are other illnesses in your community. An outbreak of influenza, for example, may be reduced if people reduced their contact with one another.

Staying calm during a pandemic can seem impossible. But, managing your stress and anxiety in a healthy way is important so you can make the best decisions possible.

While social distancing may seem like a drastic step to take, it's just a precautionary measure. And if you're practicing it, there's still a good chance you are healthy. If you panic, others will likely get anxious, so make it clear that this is just another step you're taking to help your family, friends and your community.

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Family Life

Move Naturally, Move More

Do you know someone who never seems to sit still? They are constantly on the move and when they do sit, they might fidget, shake, or bounce. Well, this is really a good thing

Research shows that if you sit less and move more, you live longer. Even if you get a 30- to 60-minute workout every day, it doesn't seem to make up for all the time you spend sitting. Small movements throughout your day add up and these movements are important.

Things like housework, washing dishes by hand, gardening, washing the car at home, mowing the lawn, and yes, even fidgeting are all ways to stay active. Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis or NEAT occurs with every activity you do, except when you sleep or exercise.

NEAT is happening while you do housework, yardwork, walk across a parking lot, and even when you fidget. These regular daily activities help change the balance of energy that you need and use. The more you move, the higher your level of NEAT. This also translates to better heart health, lower blood cholesterol, and better control of blood sugar.

People who live in the Blue Zones achieve higher levels of NEAT by their environments. They walk to a neighbor's home or to the store, they garden, and they do chores by hand. Their lifestyle doesn't include much structured exercise, but they do have enough daily activity to keep NEAT at a healthy level.

The average sedentary time for American is a whopping 9 to 10 hours per day. A primary goal for Walk Kansas and beyond should be to move more than you sit. Those 30 minutes or more of moderate activity are essential for good health and so are the small, regular movements you do the rest of the day. All of your steps add up.