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Jody G. Holthaus  
District Extension Agent  
Livestock and Natural Resources

No news from Jody.

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

### ***Soil Testing Best Management Practices***

One of the ‘baselines’ of a productive food/forage production system is soil fertility. It’s difficult to raise plants without adequate nutrients – from applied fertilizer and the soil – and determining that right rate/right product/right place combination starts with a good soil sample.

Soil sampling isn’t simply collecting a little dirt in a bag and sending it off for analysis. It starts by asking: why am I sampling? If evaluating poor growth or a uniformity issue, sample normal and abnormal areas separately to determine if a nutrient is the issue or something else. If trying to get an ‘average’ for the area, collect samples from across the field. If fertilizing according to precision zones/grids, lay out sampling points in advance to help you obtain information to guide the precision application process. If you participate in cost share programs requiring soil sampling, check program requirements in advance of sampling/testing.

Collect an appropriate number of cores. Single core samples simply aren’t accurate. because the variability is so high. Collect a minimum of 12-15 cores per sample. More is better.

Keep sampling depth consistent since nutrient levels can vary significantly with depth. For pH, organic matter, phosphorous, potassium, and zinc, sample to a six-inch depth. Sampling from varying depths can skew results if nutrients are stratified for some reason. When sampling for mobile nutrients (nitrogen, sulfur, or chloride), a two-foot sample depth is recommended.

Avoid ‘patterns’ when sampling. Zig zag back and forth rather than following planting, tillage or fertilizer application equipment. Non-uniform fertilizer applications *can* and *do* occur. Sampling in a random pattern helps offset potential uniformity issues. If grid sampling, collect accurate GPS coordinates that will allow you to return to the same area when sampling next time – then sample in a five to ten-foot radius around the center point for best results.

Watch for trends over multiple sampling cycles to get an even better idea as to how your nutrient management program is performing. For best results, sample at the same time of year (fall is an excellent time...) and following the same crop each time.

A soil sample is an inexpensive way to get good information about what the soil can provide for the growing crop, lawn, hay field, or garden while allowing us to make sound economic and environmental supplemental fertilizer application decisions based upon accurate information. For more information on soil testing – for crop, forage, garden, or landscape – contact any Meadowlark Extension District Offices or e-mail me directly at [dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu) . Soil probes are available for checkout via any Meadowlark Extension District Office. contact the Jefferson County Conservation District or Oskaloosa Office of the Meadowlark Extension District for details.

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

### **Walking at Work**

Adults spend a lot of time at work and many of us struggle to find the time to be physically active. According to the American Heart Association, we are spending more of our workday sitting as sedentary jobs have increased 83% since 1950. There are many benefits to increasing the amount of time you spend being physically active such as lowering the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancer. If it is a struggle to find 30 minutes to be physically active at one time, try 10-minute walking breaks during your workday.

\*Determine the best time to walk---Decide when it works best for you to walk. Can you replace a coffee break with a walking break? Does lunchtime work the best? Or can you come to work a few minutes early or stay a little later to squeeze in a quick walk? There are lots of options.

\*Leave a pair of walking shoes at work---Stash a comfy pair of shoes in your office or car. You won't hurt your feet by walking in your heels or dress shoes or have the excuse of uncomfortable shoes to skip a walk.

\*Get a group----Find a few co-workers who are interested in walking at work. Help each other to keep motivated. It's also a great way to network and have work discussions while you are walking.

\*Be prepared---If you prefer to walk outside or find it your only option, be prepared. Not only keep comfortable shoes available, but think about having sunglasses, sunscreen, a coat, socks or even an umbrella in your office or car.

\*Walk and talk---Need to discuss something with a co-worker? A walking meeting may be more productive and healthier too.

Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark District  
Family Life

### **How to Clean a Car Seat**

September is Baby Safety Month so it's a great time to remind us how to properly clean a car seat.

Parents and caregivers know how quickly a car seat can go from clean to grimy thanks to cracker crumbs, juice stains, yogurt spills and even bodily fluids. Here is a list of tips from the American Cleaning Institute to get your car seat clean when messes arise.

Move fast for best results. If you let stains and spills sit for a long time, removing them successfully will be next to impossible. Dry messes can sometimes wait, but wet messes cannot.

Check the baby car seat manual. While most car seats are made of similar materials, you don't want to miss any specific cleaning instructions from the manufacturer. The car seat manual should with some helpful leads for all the cleaning methods you can use. Can't find your car seat manual? Most manufacturers have them available online. Go to their website and find the model of your car seat (this can be found on a sticker on your car seat if you aren't sure), and the manual should be linked nearby.

Gather your cleaning supplies and get started. Wipe off what you can. Before you get down to cleaning out the nooks and crannies, pick up as much solid debris as you can. Use baby wipes, cleaning towels or a vacuum.

Take off the cover and removable padding from the seat for easier cleaning. Most car seats come with covers that can easily be removed.

Clean the harness and buckles. With warm water and gentle soap, wipe down the harness as much as you can. Abrasive cleaners could damage the webbing of the harness and compromise the seat. They may irritate your baby's skin as well.

Once you are done cleaning, place the car seat where it can air dry completely. Air drying in the sun will help get rid of any odor left behind and leave it smelling fresh. If you have a removable cover, hang it to dry.

It's almost impossible to keep your baby's car seat clean at all times. However, there are several things you can do to protect it and avoid catastrophes. Keep baby wipes in the car within reach. Have a pack of disposable vomit bags on hand. Use snack containers to prevent spills and bring a cleaning kit for road trips.