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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Budget Tools

I heard a presentation from a KSU Ag Economist this week providing an ‘outlook’ of sorts for 2023. Not surprisingly, it wasn’t encouraging on many fronts. His take home message? Knowing what your production budgets look like is going to be *very* important.

You likely have a pretty good idea as to what enterprise budgets in your operation look like – whether they’re formally laid out on a spreadsheet or informally put together in your mind. Either way, it’s never a bad idea to review them from time to time. Budget calculators available from the KSU Ag Economics department might help you do so.

Projected budgets are available from numerous KSU Ag Economists (with input from agronomists, animal scientists, etc…) for irrigated and non-irrigated crops as well as livestock. They include updated information (as of November, 2022) on projected prices and costs to provide a ‘general’ budget picture for many different crop and livestock enterprises.

They also include templates allowing you to compare your numbers to ‘averages’ plus tools to help you create and generate your own budgets. I’m not going to claim it is a simple process, but whether you choose to create one from scratch – or use one already created – the comparative information these budgets can provide could be of great value.

See the budgets at our KSU Ag Economics site: <https://www.agmanager.info/farm-budgets> (under the Farm Budgets tab). Hard copies are available from any District Office.

Emerald Ash Borer

Since being confirmed in Michigan 20 years ago, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has continued to spread, with millions of ash trees lost from outright death of infested trees as well as those removed with hopes of slowing the disease’s spread. Unfortunately, the spread has continued, reaching Kansas in 2012 (Jefferson County in 2015 and Jackson County in 2019; no confirmation yet in Nemaha County, but there has been in Brown in 2022).

As it continues to spread, so, too, do efforts to monitor damage and educate the general public about things they can do to help slow the damage. For home and landowners, it may be as easy as a few simple steps.

Start by monitoring your own trees. If you suspect EAB (and don’t live in one of the previously confirmed counties in Northeast Kansas), report it. A list of affected counties and reporting information can be found at the Kansas Department of Agriculture website at: <https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/plant-protect-weed-control/insects> . Information on EAB signs can be found in our Emerald Ash Borer publication, available from District Offices or: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3168.pdf> .

Another form of movement has been via firewood. If firewood infested with the beetles is moved from one location to another, new infestations occur and put even more ash trees at risk. Avoid moving firewood off site when possible with recommendations suggesting avoidance of movement across county lines. Keep this in mind when purchasing firewood as well, taking caution to make sure all firewood is locally grown and harvested. If camping a distance away, purchase firewood at your destination and burn all that you bring.

Emerald Ash Borer has already caused significant losses to forested areas and landscapes. Help slow the spread by being vigilant in your management of ash trees or firewood from them.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent
Livestock & Natural Resources

Where Have all the Eggs Gone?

As I look back at articles I've written, it seems that a beef focus persists. Some reading this may know that I do have a beef operation and that might drive some of that writing focus, but those who really know me, know I'm secretly a poultry fancier as well. Each night lately, it seems that fewer and fewer eggs get gathered at chore time, something many backyard flocks face this time of year. So, let's switch gears a bit this week to discuss avian matters.

I can always tell when eggs are limited or going up in price at the store, as interest in my farm fresh eggs goes up. 2022 has been a year of price increase (for everything!). If you want the full national egg price scoop, visit: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/PYBShellEgg.pdf> In summary, year over year egg price has been consistently two to three times higher than the three year average in 2022. National average, large egg price per dozen now sits at over \$4 per dozen. If you've purchased chicken feed, you know that has increased too, but supply also plays a part due to avian influenza nationally and other production factors.

Enough about price and macroeconomics, why does egg production drop in the winter months? The amount of daylight hours affects a chicken's reproductive cycle. Hens will begin laying when the amount of daylight reaches 14 hours per day during spring. Maximum egg laying will occur when the day length reaches 16 hours per day. This biological process is designed so that chicks hatch in spring and develop and mature during the summer months. It is this 16-hour benchmark that is often used when discussing daylight length in egg production.

After the summer solstice in late June the days start getting shorter each day, until at some point there is not enough light to stimulate the hen to keep laying. This coincides roughly with the fall equinox in September. Egg production begins to drop and some birds shed feathers as they begin to molt. Hens do not lay while molting. This decreased light factor does not result in an instant drop in egg production, but is influenced by breed, bird condition, age, etc... For example; my dual purpose, standard breed chickens will take a break laying the first chance they get in winter, while the hybrid laying hens (purchased from K-State!) have consistently charged through the winter months with good production in year one and now two.

Poultry owners can manipulate the egg laying cycle to increase egg laying in their flocks by providing artificial lighting in coops. Supplemental lighting should be at a low intensity level, just bright enough to be able to read a newspaper at bird level. Lights should be placed above feeders and waterers and there should be few areas in the hen house that are shaded. You can use a light timer, and a lower watt LED or incandescent bulb in the hen house or roosting area and this should stimulate the birds to lay. Florescent type bulbs are less effective in cold weather.

There is some debate over adding light in morning or evening, but personally prefer to add time at both the start and end of each day. It is important to allow normal roosting behavior as birds do need darkness at night. For example, if sunrise is at 7 AM and sunset is at 5 PM, that is a total of 10 hours of natural light. You will need to add 6 more hours of artificial light to keep the day length at 16 hours of total light. Start a timer at 5 AM for two hours and 5 PM for four.

As always, hens should be managed appropriately as other factors such as nutrition and overall health also have an effect on egg production. Don't forget that molting is a natural part of a hen's lifecycle and this "break" is something their bodies need. For more information and resources on egg production and hen management, visit the K-State Animal Science Poultry website at: <https://www.asi.k-state.edu/extension/poultry/>

Teresa Hatfield

District Extension Agent
Family and Community Wellness

Combating Elder Abuse

Unfortunately, the facts on elder abuse are staggering. The National Center on Elder Abuse reports that one in ten Americans over 60 will experience abuse yearly. Elder abuse is also likely under-reported. Many older adults are unwilling to report abuse because of fear of retaliation from the abuser, fear of being left alone, embarrassment, denial, or lack of mental or physical capability to report.

Elder abuse takes many forms; physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, and financial exploitation. A recent study at the Keck School of Medicine of USC found financial exploitation is the most common form of abuse. The study also found that family members were the most alleged perpetrators of the crime. Family members were also more likely to commit physical, emotional, and neglect than people unknown to the victims.

One of the ways we can try to prevent elderly abuse is to be aware of the signs and act immediately. Look for signs that could signal abuse.

Emotional and Behavioral Signs

- Unusual changes in behavior or sleep patterns
- Exhibiting fear or anxiety
- Being isolated
- Depression

Physical Signs

- Broken bones, bruises, and welts
- Cuts, sores, or burns
- Untreated bed sores
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Unexplained sexually transmitted diseases
- Dirtiness, poor nutrition, or dehydration
- Poor living conditions
- Lack of medical aids (glasses, walker, teeth, hearing aid, medications)

Financial Signs

- Unusual changes in a bank account or money management
- Unusual or sudden changes in a will or other financial documents
- Fraudulent signatures on financial documents
- Unpaid bills

You can report abuse to Adult Protective Services (APS). APS works with other local agencies to help adults at risk. These adults may be unable to protect themselves from harm. If you suspect an adult might be at risk, report your concerns by calling the Kansas Protection Report Center at: **1-800-922-5330**.

The report center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays. If the adult is at immediate risk, contact local law enforcement or dial 911.

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent
Family & Community Wellness

Kansas Local Meat Marketing Workshops to be Offered

The Kansas Local Meat Marketing Workshops will help small scale meat, poultry, and egg producers capitalize on the growing demand for local food. Attend to learn key marketing strategies and best practices from the experts, including fellow producers. Lunch, prepared with local ingredients, will be provided. KDA's Weights and Measures program will also offer free scale certification with paid registration.

*Featured sessions will be on the following: Licensing and Regulations: What You Need to Know by the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

*Marketing Strategies & Best Practices by David Bisek, FoodRise Marketing

*Panel Discussion by local producers and processors.

Cost is \$20 per attendee. Each workshop will cover the same content and will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Workshops will be held on February 3, at Wichita; February 24 at Olathe and March 3 at Parsons. Register at tinyurl.com/LocalMeatKSU This is being hosted by the Local Foods Transdisciplinary Team at Kansas State University. If you have questions, please email elblair@k-state.edu.