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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

A Look at Fertilizer Prices

On the Agriculture Today podcast from KSU last week, Dr. Gregg Ibendahl revisited the large movements in fertilizer prices over the last year. Anyone involved in production agriculture has seen – and felt – that price movement and its effect on operating budgets.

As prices move and factors continue to have influence on the market, it can be difficult to make decisions like those surrounding fertilizer applications that can have drastic effects on production budgets. To help provide at least a little clarity, Dr. Ibendahl puts out regular forecasts to help with those budget (altering...) decisions on his KSU Agricultural Economics webpage: <https://www.agmanager.info/contributors/ibendahl> . Two of the most recent posts look at oil and consumer prices – both factors in a model he has developed to predict fertilizer prices.

If you visit his page, the third document you'll find includes his fertilizer price predictions. The long and the short of his model suggests this: if you have not started looking at fertilizer pricing for the upcoming year, there's good reason to do so soon, with the factors in his model predicted to increase in price – meaning fertilizer might as well.

Budgets he once revised annually are now reviewed annually. In addition to fertilizer (up 30 percent since last August), herbicides are up almost 50 percent during the same time period, making the need for continued monitoring of pricing opportunities important to budget bottom lines. For more on Ibendahl's fertilizer thoughts, check out the website above or listen to his interview. It's episode 1299 at: <https://agtodayksu.libsyn.com/> .

Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle

All it takes is a little weather change for pests that spent the summer outside, to look for a way inside. One of the common 'invaders' is the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle (MALB).

Typically found in trees and shrubs through the summer (they were introduced to help control aphid populations...), this annual migration indoors helps the adult MALB survive the winter. They'll find their way in to just about any protected area available. Colors will range from orange to yellow to red, some with spots and others with no spots at all.

While their chewing mouthparts do occasionally result in bites, they are harmless. In fact, because they are considered beneficials, there are only a limited number of pesticides labeled (a list can be found at the link below. Always read and follow product label directions.). It means focus needs to be spent on sealing cracks around windows, doors, etc... and making sure screens are tight fitting when you open windows to enjoy the cool fall weather.

If you see them congregating on the south/west side of the home on warm afternoons, sweep them up with a broom or vacuum. Just make sure you move them a good distance away, or they'll likely return. For information about Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle, contact any District Office or check out our KSU Horticulture fact sheet on them at: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/common-pest-problems/documents/Lady%20Bug%20Asian.pdf> .

Ross Mosteller

District Extension Agent
Livestock & Natural Resources

Cowherd Supplement Considerations

Opening the gate from the dry, brown, crunchy grass pasture - out to a freshly harvested corn field last weekend has me considering my approach to cow supplementation this fall. I'll often cuss the smooth brome and fescue makeup of this particular pasture, but typically, there is some lush green fall growth that helps extend the grazing season. While this is not case this fall, it does lead into discussions on what supplementation programs might look like this fall/winter.

Probably few producers enjoying paying for supplemented protein and/or energy sources, yet understand the importance of maintaining or improving body condition scores sooner rather than later. As forage becomes dry, dormant or scarce, it becomes necessary to design an economic protein supplement program for cows utilizing lower quality forages. Feeding supplemental protein is necessary when the existing diet does not meet the animal's nutritional requirements. This typically occurs when grass becomes dry, dormant, and protein content in the plant drops.

Feeding cattle supplemental protein can boost forage intake and assist in effective rumen digestion. Long-term research shows that generally, a typical crop residue field will provide forage that meets the animals needs completely for one month of grazing, and energy needs - with protein supplementation, for two months of grazing. Protein supplements also can be important with grazing of dormant winter range forage, because these forage sources are typically very low in protein. All that said, rarely is there a time where animals can graze all winter long without some plan for supplementing protein and in most cases energy as well.

Knowing when protein supplements are needed, takes a watchful, well-trained eye. For the cow-calf operation, this is most easily accomplished with visual body-condition scoring. A body-condition score (BCS) of 4.5 to 6.5 is a good target. If BCS gets above that level you are probably over-supplementing. If BCS drops below, the cow is using reserves and not meeting her requirements, so supplementation is needed. In a stocker/feeder scenario, rate of gain is typically a good indicator of whether supplemental feed is necessary.

Ideally, animals need to have all the nutrients they require provided daily. However, that might not always be practical and research shows that alternate delivery methods can work. For example, a project at Texas A&M showed that offering a weekly protein supplement, well-dosed the animals with protein, creating a stockpiling effect. Feeding three times a week was shown to be optimal, but weekly feeding is less expensive than daily feeding and decreases time and labor expense. Another benefit was alteration in the animal's behavior pattern, to graze more with infrequent supplementation versus daily, where animals stand at the gate waiting for supplement.

The convenience of self-fed or self-limiting supplements has helped increased their use and popularity, but this can be at the sacrifice of individual intake. Some cows may not consume any supplement, while others may consume large amounts. Most commercial products have an intake limiter in them, which helps minimize over-consumption. Making sure there are enough tanks, tubs or blocks for the number of cows will reduce variation in intake.

Next week I plan to continue this discussion, looking a bit more at the economic side. In the meantime, if you'd like to know more check out the supplement section of K-State's resource: [Questions and Answers on Beef Cattle Nutrition C733](#)

October 21, 2022

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent
Family and Community Wellness

No news this week.

Cindy Williams

District Extension Agent
Family & Community Wellness

Canning Meat Workshop to Be Held

Freezing isn't the only method used to extend the life of meats. Meats such as beef, pork, venison, bear, lamb, or veal, can be canned in pint or quart jars. These can be stored and enjoyed for up to at least 12 months.

Do you want or need to learn how to can meat? We have just the workshop for you. We will be conducting a Meat Canning Workshop on Wednesday, November 2, at the Prairie Band Potawatomi Bingo Hall, near Mayetta. Conducting this workshop will be Karen Blakeslee, from the K-State Rapid Response Center. The time for this workshop will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. At this workshop you will learn the science and the process of canning most meats safely.

There is no charge for this workshop, but you **MUST** pre-register and only a limited number of slots are available. We will be canning bison and deer in pint jars. You will get to take jars home, but bring a shoe box to take hot jars home with you.

A light lunch will be provided as well as door prizes. To register, contact Janis Simon at jjanis@ksu.edu If you have further questions, please contact Cindy Williams, Meadowlark Extension District Agent at 785-863-2212.