

David Hallauer  
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

## **Foxtail**

One of the more troublesome weeds, particularly of hay fields, showing up this time of year is foxtail. There are three warm season annual species of foxtails we can see in Northeast Kansas: green, yellow, and giant.

Our best bet for combatting foxtail infestations is a healthy stand of our desired forage. It often starts with an appropriate fertility/grazing/haying program for cool season forage systems to help them compete against the foxtail that must get a start from seed each season (well after the brome or fescue has already started growing). Unfortunately, too many years of late season heat or drought or armyworm infestation – or all three – have thinned stands, allowing the warm season foxtails to germinate and grow with plenty of space to get a foothold.

Mowing can help, but it will likely have to be done multiple times. Foxtail plants thrive in our warm summer weather and even when cut off will likely try to put up a head again, often lower in height than it was the first time. Even if we could cut low enough to get the lowest of the seed heads, we could be doing damage to the recovering cool season grass as we did so.

One of the more common questions centers around herbicide control programs. A cross reference of labels for control of foxtail in brome ([www.cdms.net](http://www.cdms.net) – Advanced Search option) yielded three active ingredients: Glyphosate, Pendimethalin, and Quinclorac. Glyphosate is non-selective, meaning it's going to indiscriminately control anything green it's applied to and is not a great option in most pastures or hay fields unless you can manage spot treatments well.

Pendimethalin has received some testing attention in Kansas by former NE Area Extension Agronomist Dr. Stu Duncan. He tested three different products, with the Pendimethalin product Prowl H2O (applied in early spring) showing the best combination of control with minimal crop injury. Unfortunately, even those applications did not reduce late-summer foxtail pressure even after showing apparent suppression well into the growing season.

Herbicide applications for foxtail control aren't without issues. In addition to the potential for crop injury noted in his study (see the entire study results online at: [https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/eu\\_article\\_prep.php?article\\_id=2773](https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/eu_article_prep.php?article_id=2773)), be sure and read product labels closely before doing applications. Seedling grass injury could occur if seeding were to occur in these areas too close to the time of herbicide application. When these pre-emergence products do work, they could leave 'open space' where foxtail has been prevalent in previous years until desirable forages can fill in. Other broadleaf weeds could fill in as well. Careful management will be needed to prevent new plants from getting a start next year.

There is no silver bullet – but there are options. For the best results, implement a good prevention program whenever possible. If that isn't enough, and foxtail continues to be an issue, other options like mowing or maybe even herbicide control programs may need to be considered.

Ross Mosteller  
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

### **Setting Records Isn't Always Positive**

This last week has been an extreme tough in northeast Kansas and much of the county! The record heat wave, with dangerously high heat indexes, has taken a toll on plants, livestock and humans alike. It is with a heavy heart that I write this because I know so many have experienced animal death loss, which has some serious effects on the operational and human sides of operations. My intent is to help direct producers to resources available, hopefully some that you are already well aware of. I get the desire to not ask for help - I'm a stubborn, independent, proud producer myself; but I encourage everyone to reach out for assistance through channels available to help in tough times.

There are some very good tools that can help us to prepare, monitor and reference weather events and related heat stress. Two very important tools that can help managers monitor potential heat stress are: The [U.S. Meat Animal Research Center's seven-day forecast tool](#) which looks at; temperature, humidity and solar radiation. The second is the [Kansas Mesonet animal comfort index](#) that updates climate information hourly. In terms of the next topic of discussion, the historical weather data of Kansas Mesonet should prove to be useful, <https://mesonet.k-state.edu/weather/historical/>

Livestock producers impacted by the recent weather may be eligible for the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). LIP offers payments to eligible livestock producers for deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions, of which extreme heat qualifies. Eligible livestock includes: bison, cattle, equine, goats, poultry, sheep, swine and a long list of other animals. An owner or contract grower must file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is first apparent as well as file an application for payment within 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

It is recommended that producers document loss and provide a statement from a veterinarian verifying loss due to heat. Documentation of temperature, humidity and heat stress leading up to and through the loss event will likely need to be provided. The LIP national payment rate for eligible livestock owners is based on 75 percent of the average fair market value of the livestock. More information on USDA disaster assistance can be found at your local Farm Service Agency office or: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/index>

Kansas farmers, ranchers and their families are the backbone of this state, providing high-quality crops, livestock and dairy products. The stress that comes with this occupation can be overwhelming. Unpredictable weather, heavy workloads and financial worries can sometimes take their toll on farm families and lead to mental and emotional distress. Caring for your own health and wellness is often overlooked but is just as critical as caring for the business of your farm. There are resources available to help, notably the Kansas Ag Stress resources <https://www.kansasagstress.org/> If you need to talk to someone, call for free 24/7 support at 1-800-447-1985

Laura Phillips  
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

### **It's Time to Fertilize Cool Season Grasses**

If you have Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue in your yard, it's time to give them your attention. While our current heat wave feels never ending, soon our days will shorten and temperatures will lower. As it does, our aptly named cool season grasses will enter their fall growth phase, spreading new shoots and roots.

In order for these grasses to truly thrive, they will need sufficient amounts of nutrients. Our hot summer has likely depleted the nutrients in your lawn, which makes September most important time of year to fertilize your cool season lawn.

When you purchase fertilizer, you will see a series of three numbers on the bag. The first number is nitrogen, which helps your grasses develop healthy root systems and recover from the stressful summer conditions. Most lawns will require regular nitrogen applications. We recommend applying 1 to 1.5 pounds of quick-release nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. It is a good idea to repeat this process in November. If there is no rain, make sure to water in the fertilizer yourself.

The second and third number on the bag, are phosphorus (P) and potassium (K), respectively. These nutrients contribute to overall growth and stress tolerance. In established lawns, you often have sufficient quantities of P and K, so there is no need to add these nutrients unless a soil test indicates the need. You can look for fertilizers with high nitrogen, such as 30-0-0 or 29-5-4 or 27-3-3.

When fertilizing, take care to read the instructions and apply fertilizer evenly across the lawn and the rate given on the packaging. When you are done fertilizing, sweep or blow any fertilizer or granular products off of your sidewalks and hard surfaces. This prevents the fertilizer from entering our water ways and protects our water quality.

If you have questions about the fertilizer you need, would like to do a soil test, or need guidance on applying fertilizer to your yard, reach out to our office for more information.

Teresa Hatfield  
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

### **Build a Kit**

Are you ready in case of an emergency? Are you prepared if you lose power for an extended time or must evacuate your home quickly? Emergencies can happen quickly and unexpectedly. On July 14 this year, I was at home when a severe thunderstorm knocked out power to my house for 36 hours. Several years before this happened, I had prepared an emergency kit. However, after our move back to northeast Kansas, I had yet to take the opportunity to review my kit to ensure it was ready. I found that the batteries in the kit were corroded, and the hand crank charger for my cell wouldn't work because the adapter was for an older phone. The situation could have been more serious, but my husband and I were lucky it was only a short-term power outage. This experience reinforced the importance of a properly stocked emergency kit and grab-and-go bag if you need to evacuate your home quickly. The recent horrifying fire in Maui illustrates the importance of being prepared to act rapidly in an emergency.

When an emergency arises, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Having the supplies you need is essential. A disaster kit will contain food, water, and basic supplies to last several days in an emergency. After you have assembled your kit, maintain and update it regularly. Below is a list of items you may want to include in your kit. Also, remember your pet's needs. You can place your kit's items in an airtight plastic bag, plastic storage container, or easy-to-carry duffel bag or backpack.

Ready.gov Kit Recommendations:

- Water and non-perishable food for several days
- Extra cell phone battery or charger
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio that can receive NOAA Weather Radio tone alerts and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First Aid Kit
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Dust masks to help filter contaminated air, plastic sheeting, and duct tape to shelter in place.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Non-sparking wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Can opener (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps

Additional Items to Consider:

- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food, water, and supplies for your pet
- Important family documents, such as copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records, in a portable waterproof container
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Complete change of clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy shoes. Additional clothing if you live in a cold climate.
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies, personal hygiene items, and hand sanitizer
- Mess kits, Paper cups, plates and disposable utensils, paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children

If you need more information about preparing for an emergency, you can visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).

Cindy Williams  
District Extension Agent, Family & Community Wellness

### **Tips to Safely Freeze Your Tomatoes**

About this time in the gardening season, you still may have tomatoes ripening, but not enough at one time to fill a canner. If so, freezing is a good alternative. Tomatoes can be quickly frozen without blanching whether their skins are on or off, whether they are whole, sliced, shopped or pureed.

First, be sure to select firm, ripe tomatoes. Discard tomatoes that are spoiled or insect damaged. Like all produce, tomatoes need to be properly washed before freezing. Wash tomatoes under running water and dry with a paper towel. Do not wash tomatoes in a sink filled with water because contaminated water can be absorbed through tomatoes' stem scars. Using soap or detergent is not recommended with fruit and vegetables because they can absorb detergent residues.

If you want to peel the washed tomatoes, dip them into boiling water for about one minute, or until the skin splits. The skin can then be easily removed. To freeze tomatoes with their skins, wash the tomatoes and then cut away their stem scars and the surrounding areas.

Wait to season tomatoes until after they have been defrosted and are about to be served. Freezing could possibly weaken or strengthen herbs and seasonings.

To freeze tomatoes, with or without skins, place them single layer on a cookie sheet and put in freezer. Once the tomatoes are frozen, transfer them to bags or containers.

For best results, use freezer containers that are tightly sealed. Store in a freezer with a temperature at or below zero degrees F. It is recommended that all frozen vegetables be eaten within eight months.

To use the frozen tomatoes, remove the quantity you need and run under warm water. This will help defrost them and any tomato skins will slip off easily.

Thawed tomatoes can be used in recipes calling for cooked tomatoes. Since freezing gives tomatoes a mushy texture, do not substitute for raw tomatoes.

For more information about canning or freezing foods, contact your local Meadowlark Extension District Offices located in Oskaloosa, Holton or Seneca. KSU has several publications on preserving foods that include many USDA tested recipes that you might want to check out as well.