

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Native Grass Establishment

As fertilizer input costs for cool season forages have increased, so has interest in other forage options. If you're thinking a perennial forage, native grass might have come to mind. There are lots of great resources for supplies of native grass seed, planting equipment, and best management practices for seeding (*Establishing Native Grasses* –available upon request from any District Office or online at: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf2291.pdf>), but attention first needs to be given to whether it's even the right option.

Fertility requirements and grazing/haying management for warm season native grasses are slightly different than they are for cool season grasses. While you may save input costs on the fertility side, you may also give up acres from a stocking rate standpoint. The grazing window is different, too, so thinking may have to change when it comes to turn out times and end of season rest. Grazing/haying height management will be different, as will production. Native grasses simply can't be managed exactly the same as we're used to for cool season species.

Despite their differences, warm season native grasses can be a really great addition/complement to a forage system. If you've got acreage on which you are considering a species change, native grass (or native grass/forb) plantings can be a good option to consider not only for their grazing and haying qualities, but wildlife as well. The reference mentioned above is a great one to get you started.

Fruit Trees Frost Tolerance

If we're going to put time and effort in to planting/watering/pruning/disease control/etc... a fruit tree, we want to see it produce fruit. Unfortunately, Kansas springs can wreak havoc with that from a temperature standpoint, with apricot and peach trees the most vulnerable. While the tree itself often survives, fruit buds may not, compromising fruit production along the way.

If you're in the market for apricot or peach trees for a new planting, spend some time in varietal selection. Virginia Tech research in the 90's (<https://tinyurl.com/y35ntxau>) showed a maximum of four days difference between early and late varieties – but in some years, that's all that's needed. For apricots, those in the study considered late blooming were *Hungarian Rose*, *Tilton* and *Harlayne* (*Harglow* is also considered late-blooming).

There are actually *two* characteristics of peaches to consider when evaluating potential damage: bloom time and fruit bud hardiness (ability to withstand late frosts rather than just extreme low winter temperatures). Later bloomers include *China Pearl*, *Encore*, *Intrepid*, *Contender* and *Risingstar* (<http://contentdm.nmsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/AgCircs/id/73025>). Another excellent cultivar from the standpoint of cold hardiness when in flower is *Intrepid*.

Culturally, try to keep plantings on hills, so cold air can 'drain' to lower elevations. Protected locations are important as well, allowing for a warmer micro-climate than exposed locations. Unfortunately, damage may still occur. It's all part of the challenge (and frustration?) of growing apricots and peaches in Kansas.

Ross Mosteller

District Extension Agent
Livestock & Natural Resources

Sheep & Goat Opportunities

My Dad hated sheep & goats and took pride in the fact that our generational homestead had never had either touch the soil. Makes me think of an episode of the show “1923” I watched not long ago that highlighted struggles between sheep and cattle producers on grazing lands, it’s an age-old debate. Now, Mom’s family had both species and Grandma told me that sheep were preferred because they gave two cash crops a year, in wool & lambs. Since I was never allowed to have sheep or goats in 4-H, my practical knowledge with these species is limited.

The small ruminant has seen increased popularity in Kansas in recent years, both sheep and goat. Smaller acreages, increased value in the marketplace, mob grazing, weed/brush control and many other factors have contributed to this increase. 2021 USDA data shows that Kansas ranks 15th in both species, but is a relatively small player compared to the top five states in either category. Texas leads the pack in both sheep and goats, with most sheep found in the mountain west and goats in the south/south east United States.

All of this information so far could be seen to have a slight negative context, that is not the intent at all! In fact, the intention is to highlight some educational resources and events for those interested in learning more about Sheep and Goats. One of the more comprehensive publications that addresses both production systems can be found at Penn State Extension publication [“So You Want to Raise Sheep or Goats?”](#) There is no way to cover all the information found within these pages or any of the many other University Extension publications, in the space allowed here. Suffice it to say, that there are many things to consider and while they are both small ruminates, sheep and goats are not created equally. Many production practices will crossover, but there are differences, maybe most notably fencing!

It is time once again for the Northeast Kansas Sheep and Goat School. K-State Research and Extension is currently without a Sheep & Goat Specialist, but we are charging on with the school, bringing in local resources. This event will be held at the McLouth High School in McLouth, Kansas on Thursday, March 9, beginning at 6:30 pm. Dr. Matthew Kelso from Cedar Ridge Veterinary Clinic, will cover health related topics, including changes coming with antibiotic requirements this summer. Bennie Phillips from Phillips & Sons, Leavenworth Livestock Auction will give his perspective on the markets, giving tips on ways to get the highest value when marketing. The final presentation will be a question and answer panel format with the host Extension agents, addressing basic production practices.

You are asked to RSVP to any of the host Extension units - Brown, Leavenworth or Meadowlark District by March 6. A full flyer can be found on the Events page of the Meadowlark Extension District website at: <https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/events/> Please plan to join us!

Teresa Hatfield

District Extension Agent
Family and Community Wellness

Focus on Family Caregivers

Most people will be a caregiver at some time in their lives. Sometimes we don't think of ourselves as caregivers when we take a meal to a neighbor or volunteer to take someone to the doctor's office or help pick up around the house. Who are our family caregivers in the U.S.?

- 53 million people provide unpaid care in the United States
- 42 million care for someone over the age of 50
- 11 million care for someone with dementia
- 24 hours is the average amount of care provided each week
- 50 % care for a parent or in-law

Sometimes the toll on the caregiver becomes too much and too great. To take care of the person you are caring for, you need to be able to take care of yourself. When we are on an airplane, they always tell us that if we are traveling with young children, we first put on our oxygen masks and then help our children. It is the same with caregiving; you must learn to care for yourself.

Caregivers experience much stress due to caregiving's emotional and physical challenges. Caregivers often find it challenging to take care of themselves. They are more likely to experience sleep loss, have poor eating habits, fail to get enough exercise, put off getting a routine checkup, are at greater risk of depression, and are more susceptible to illness. They are also at a greater risk of abusing alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Caregivers have a 60% higher death rate than non-caregivers.

Caregivers need to overcome barriers to self-care before they see how important it is to take care of themselves. Personal attitudes and beliefs can get in the way of caregivers caring for themselves. Some report that they feel they are being selfish and that they are not the ones needing the care. They believe asking for help makes them a poor caregiver. Or, I promised Dad I would not put Mom in a nursing home. Failing to take care of yourself could lead to you being unable to be the best caregiver you can be.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a program for family caregivers that builds the skills caregivers need to care for themselves as they provide care for others. Caregivers learn to reduce stress and understand the importance of self-care. Caregivers will fill their caregiver toolbox with self-care tools to reduce personal stress, change negative self-talk, communicate their needs to family and healthcare or service providers, communicate effectively in challenging situations, recognize the messages in the emotions, deal with complicated feelings, and make tough decisions. Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a six-week class series that meets each week for 90 minutes. Class participants will also receive a copy of The Caregiver Helpbook.

Virtual classes begin Tuesday, March 7th, at 2:00 p.m. The cost of the class is \$10. Please contact Teresa Hatfield at the Meadowlark Extension District to reserve your place in the class at 785-364-4125 or thatfield@ksu.edu.

Cindy Williams

District Extension Agent
Family & Community Wellness

Egg Safety from Hen to Consumer

If you have been in the store lately you will probably notice the increase in price of eggs. Eggs are very nutritious and versatile. But, they also bring a food safety risk due to Salmonella contamination. This risk can occur inside the egg and on the eggshell.

If a chicken is infected with Salmonella, it can contaminate the egg when it is formed inside the chicken. Farmers, big and small, must be vigilant to identify infected chickens and separate them from the rest of the flock. Chickens are messy, and they can pick up pathogens anywhere in their environment. Keeping coops clean is important.

Eggs are refrigerated for safety. If temperature abuse happens, this causes the egg to seat and the porous shell will pull any contamination from outside the shell into the egg interior through osmosis.

In some locations, consumers are demanding cage-free egg production. This type of production only removes the cages. The chickens are still under one roof. The debate is ongoing whether this will be an advantage to make eggs safer.

Just remember when buying eggs, always open the carton and check eggs for cracks or other damage. This is to help you get the most for your food dollars.