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District Extension Agent  
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

### **ARC/PLC Decision Date**

It might seem far away, but the March 15th deadline for making annual elections of either Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) is just around the corner. Now is a great time to review past elections to help make elections for the coming program cycle.

There are some important points to remember. First, the 2023 election applies to 2023 harvested crops. Second, remember ARC and PLC both have components based upon marketing year average prices. The marketing year for fall crops starts September 1 of the cropping year and runs through August 31 of the year *after* harvest (the wheat marketing year is June 1 of the harvest year to May 31 of the following year). In short, your decision is going to be made using prices that may/may not be similar to today.

This may be old hat for many, but it's still good to think through how these programs can help mitigate risk. For example, if commodity prices remain above reference prices and county yields are average or above (a great scenario), no PLC or ARC payments would be made. If commodity prices remain high but yields are *below* average (county level yields), no PLC payments will be made, but ARC County payments *might*. If yields stay average or above, but prices drop below the reference price: PLC payments will be made, but ARC-CO payment aren't likely – unless prices are very low. If yields are below average at the county level and prices fall below references prices as well, PLC will pay and ARC-CO payments will be made as well (though they may not be as large as PLC).

While yields and prices change, the same selection principals remain: if you want protection primarily against falling prices, PLC is a good option. If protection against revenue losses (price and county level yield factors together) is the goal, ARC-CO might be a better fit. For more information on ARC and PLC, visit: <https://www.agmanager.info/crop-insurance/risk-management-strategies/arc-or-plc-question> . If price projections are what you're after, visit: <https://www.agmanager.info/crop-insurance/risk-management-strategies/projections-and-sources-mya-prices-arc-and-plc-commodity> . These references are also available in printed format from any District Office.

### **Truth or Myth - Adding Sand to Clay Soils**

You might hear lots of remedies for issues in the garden/landscape, but unfortunately, not all of them are true. Such is the case for the *myth* of adding sand to clay soils to help drainage.

Clay soils *do* drain slower than clay and it would seem a good idea to 'fix' the issue by adding sand. Unfortunately, the issue of soil particle size (texture) comes in to play. When you add sand to a clay soil, instead of the sand grains touching and providing pore space, the very small clay particles fill up virtually all of the open space, effectively cementing them together. Instead of better drainage, you have instead created a brick like mass.

A better amendment option is regular incorporation of organic matter (compost, leaf mold, well-rotted manure, or a green manure crop) Normally, we consider about 80 percent sand to be sufficient. In most cases this makes the use of sand impractical.

## Ross Mosteller

District Extension Agent  
Livestock & Natural Resources

### **Limited Forage Availability, Now What?**

K-State Research and Extension has a booth at the Topeka Farm Show and I took my turn on a shift. There were funny looks from folks who tried to engage me in conversation about K-State basketball, given my obvious lack of knowledge there, as frankly I could care less about that season or any basketball game. That's not to say that KSRE employees are not dedicated to our University, but there is good researched-based, information from other Universities. Today's discussion, for example, references some good work done at Oklahoma State University.

Looking at the national drought monitor, the majority of states west of the Mississippi river are continuing to deal with some level of drought; with Kansas, Nebraska & Oklahoma at the epicenter of severe drought. Most cow calf producers in this region are into winter feeding with access to very limited hay supplies and stockpiled forage compared to "normal". This means that typical approaches to maintaining cowherds have 1) become much more expensive or 2) are simply not available. Therefore, it has become time to look for Plan B, C or D!

Information that provides guidelines for alternative winter-feeding methods can be found in an Oklahoma State University Extension Fact Sheet: ANSI-3034 called "[Management of Cows with Limited Forage Availability](#)". This is an excellent publication, specifically as you look at the guidance given in regard to limit feeding options. In this fact sheet you will find:

- Culling suggestions (*if that has not already been done*)
- Recommendations about how much hay is needed if it is to be purchased
- Limit-feeding grain with limited forage available
- Suggested complete diets for cows fed in dry lots
- Limit energy concentrate feeding management tips
- Limit feeding of hay

While there are some successfully proven approaches referenced here, most of them will require more intensive management, equipment and a watchful producer's eye. If your operation is not set up to feed more concentrated diets, with more management, this may not be practical. Another consideration might be that these systems generally require greater concentration of animals into feedlots or sacrifice pastures/paddocks, which will likely have additional side-effects down the road. Be aware too, that these are not "cheap" fixes and grain-based and grain by-product diets are inflated this year, given the higher commodity and input prices.

Now, to prove that I do bleed purple, K-State's Dr. Jaymelynn Farney, composed a [Beef Tips](#) article on this same topic in 2018, covering some similar considerations. She well illustrates the benefit to simply dividing up the cow herd by production status, body condition, age, etc... and selectively feeding to the various groups, by nutritional needs. If physical space and equipment is an option to implement this approach, it doesn't have much additional cost.

There are some interesting discussions happening throughout the animal agriculture industry, and it is defiantly a year to look at some "outside the box" thinking. Look at what your situation is, look for alternative methods in many forms and have those plans B, C & D at your disposal, should you need them. If fog days are accurate, a wetter spring is coming, so let's all keep up positive thinking and focus on what we can control.

## Teresa Hatfield

District Extension Agent  
Family and Community Wellness

### **Make Your New Year Health Resolution**

As we focus on the new year, many people start by making resolutions about their health. Most of us know the best way to keep healthy is to exercise, eat right, and maintain a healthy weight. We also need to take advantage of our health insurance's preventative services. Many preventive services are covered at 100% if you are on Medicare. They do not require that you meet the Medicare deductible.

Preventative care is the care you receive to detect and prevent illness and keep you healthy. Medicare Part B covers many preventive services, such as screenings, vaccinations, and counseling. If you are on Original Medicare, you will pay nothing for most preventative services. If you are on a Medicare Advantage Plan, you will need to visit an in-network provider to have those services covered at 100%. You may be charged if you see an out-of-network provider. Keep in mind that if during a preventative screening, your provider discovers a problem or needs to treat a problem, Medicare may bill you for any diagnostic care you receive. For example, suppose the doctor removes a polyp during a colonoscopy. In that case, the cost to remove the polyp will not be covered at 100%.

New to Medicare beneficiaries should take advantage of the "Welcome to Medicare" preventative visit. This visit is covered for the first twelve months after you enroll in Medicare Part B. Your healthcare provider will talk to you about your medical history, check your height and weight, and check your blood pressure. Your provider will also give you a written plan letting you know what screenings, shots, and other preventative services you need. After that visit each year, you can schedule your "Annual Wellness" visit. During the Annual Wellness visit, you and your primary care provider will create or update a personalized prevention plan. Keep in mind that the Annual Wellness visit is not a physical and is similar to the Welcome to Medicare preventive visit.

Some types of preventative services include:

- Bone mass measurements
- Breast cancer screening (mammograms)
- Cardiovascular disease screening (cholesterol, lipid, and triglyceride levels)
- Cervical and vaginal cancer screening
- Colorectal cancer screening
- Depression screening
- Diabetes screening and self-management training
- Glaucoma tests
- Hepatitis B and C screening
- HIV screening
- Lung cancer screening
- Prostate cancer screening
- vaccinations (Flu, Pneumococcal, Hepatitis B, and Shingles)

For more information on Medicare preventative services, contact Teresa Hatfield at the Meadowlark Extension District at 785-364-4125.

## Cindy Williams

District Extension Agent  
Family & Community Wellness

### **Making Your Family Walks More Fun**

At the time of this writing, we had some snow, ice and a little cold snap. But we have had some nice days where I hope you and your family were able to enjoy a great way to connect while being physically active. Like any routine, though, you may be feeling the need to spice it up. If your family is in a walking rut, try these four tips to boost the fun for everyone.

1. **Come with questions:** One of the favorite parts of a family/friend walks is not the physical activity. It is the time to talk with friends or family. Very rarely do we get one-on-one time, without a screen or other distractions vying for our attention. When we walk, it is easier to focus on one another and a great time to ask questions. Conversation starters are great for getting our chats going. They can be as simple as, “What should we have for dinner?” they can be as thoughtful as, “What is one thing you are thankful for right now?” sometimes we even get silly with, “Would you rather have purple spots all over your skin or green hair?”
2. **Listen to music or books:** You can bring your phone on walks in case of emergency, but we also use it to listen to music. Usually, we end up dancing more than walking, which adds the perfect amount of spice to a walk routine. If music isn’t your thing, try an audiobook. Instead of counting the minutes, walk until you complete a chapter. What a great way to exercise your body and mind!
3. **Track your mileage:** We stay motivated by setting goals and tracking your mileage. You can start your watch at the beginning of your walk and go until a family member is ready to stop. Sometimes when they realize how close they are to a full mile, they will want to keep going. Creative tip: You can take it one step farther by making a mileage paper chain. For each mile walked, add a link so your child can have a fun interactive visual.
4. **Change your scenery:** You can only walk to the stop sign or around the block so many times! When you begin to sense burnout with your routine, it may be time for a change of scenery. This can be as simple as doing your normal routine in reverse, or you might try that new walking path you noticed on your drive every day. Many communities have access to walking paths or trails—do some research to find new views you can enjoy while being active.