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Hackberry Butterfly

Many will remember 2012 for the dry weather issues plaguing the area. Fewer remember it for a phenomenon repeating itself right now: the 'invasion' of the hackberry butterfly. Mass hatch of this butterfly isn't a surprise. It happens here annually. Fortunately, it doesn't happen in numbers like this year, but when it does, we take notice.

Why here and now? We don't have a great answer for that. Outbreaks like we've seen thus far are sporadic and unpredictable. Maybe it's the winter we had? Maybe it's moisture conditions? Maybe we're just lucky. Whatever the reason, they're presence can be alarming, made worse as they 'rain' on vehicles as they pass or swarm you as you walk by.

Even more alarming should be the (potential) damage the larval form of this many butterflies could cause. Fortunately, their activity is typically confined to hackberry trees. The 2012 infestation resulted in significant damage to hackberries, but even then, most recovered nicely the following year. Damage to other tree species or field crops/turf/etc... like we might see with species like fall armyworm is not expected. They're mostly just a nuisance.

Speaking of fall armyworm, we have yet to find them in scouting locations in the state yet this summer. Since they migrate in, a trapping network has been established across the eastern third of the state in an attempt to monitor for their arrival. Thus far, we've not confirmed the presence of moths here just yet. When we know more, we'll pass it along.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Proper Hay Storage Benefits

I've been trying to "Kick the Hay Habit" after following Jim Gerrish and other year-round grazers. That said, putting up hay is still a favorite summer tradition on a personal level and is an important summertime activity for many agriculture producers. Travel down any gravel road this time of year and you'll likely get stuck behind or meet hay equipment in this busy time. Proper haying practices take time, effort, and resources to harvest properly. With so much invested, it is critical to make the most of this effort with proper storage. In preparing to write on this subject, I came across an Oklahoma State Extension release from Mark Johnson, Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist. Let's look at what Dr. Johnson recommends for storing hay.

Proper hay storage is always important. This year, with limited amounts of harvested forage available and record high prices, it is worth discussing some simple storage practices that can lead to less spoilage. First, one of the few upsides to the drought of the past few months is that there has been very little precipitation falling on hay stored outside. Precipitation, air temperature and humidity all lead to more spoilage in big bales. Twine wrapped bales are more subject to spoilage than net wrapped. Greater bale density leads to less spoilage. That being said, keep the following in mind when considering how your hay is stored.

Select a site on higher ground that is not shaded and is open to air flow to enhance drying conditions. The site should be well drained to minimize moisture absorption into the bottom of bales. Ground contact leads to more bale spoilage. When practical keep bales off the ground using low cost surplus materials like old pallets, fence posts, railroad ties and tires. Another option is a six-inch layer of coarse ground rock. A thinner layer of packed ag lime can also be used to create a soil barrier layer. Anything that can be done to maximize drainage and minimize moisture within and around the storage site will be beneficial.

Bails should be stored in rows, butted end-to-end, and oriented in a north/south direction. Avoid stacking three rows of hay on top of each other, in a triangle shape. This formation leads to more spoilage, particularly in the two bottom rows. North/south orientation combined with at least three feet between the rows permits good sunlight penetration and airflow, allowing for faster drying. Vegetation between the rows should be mowed.

Large round bales stored outside with plastic or canvas usually sustain much less spoilage compared to unprotected bales. If barn storage is an option, this is the best method. Dry matter losses in round bales stored for up to nine months in an enclosed barn should be less than two percent. If the discussion involves rectangular bales, storage under roof or tarps becomes extremely important, as they do not shed water as well as the round bales do.

All forages packaged in large round bales benefit from protection and proper storage practices. Producers are encouraged to consider the cost to benefit ratio of providing this protection. Factors to consider include the value of hay, projected in storage losses, local environmental conditions, the cost of providing protection and how long the hay will be in storage before it is fed. At the very least it may be worthwhile to restack or re-orient your hay supply according to the best practices described.

Although the publication referenced is a bit dated on the economics, there is good Kansas data and recommendations found within the K-State Research and Extension publication, [MF-1066 Large Round Bale Hay Storage](#) which further details ways to address storage losses.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Surviving the Kansas Heat

The summer months are upon us, and that means the Kansas heat. We don't think about extreme heat often causing the most weather-related deaths, even above those caused by hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. Last year in Topeka, our nearest metropolitan neighbor, had ten days topping over 100° F. There have been warmer years on record; however, once the temperature starts to head upward, we must be prepared to prevent heat-related illness.

Heat-related illnesses can occur in a relatively short period. Certain groups of people can be more vulnerable than others. The heat can be a burden on young children and older adults. Young children's bodies are less able to adapt to heat than adults. Older adults are more susceptible to heat because of chronic health conditions and the medications they take. Also, pregnant women and those with chronic health conditions of any age are at risk.

Remember always to check your backseat. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, most hot car deaths happen because a caregiver forgets a child in the car. This often happens because the caregiver forgot to drop them off at daycare or preschool. Make sure always to check your backseat. Place an important item next to the car seat, like a purse, cell phone, or briefcase. Children sometimes climb into unattended vehicles, accounting for 25% of hot car deaths. Make sure to lock your vehicle's doors and trunk when you are not using your vehicle.

Understanding the signs and symptoms of a heat-related illness could save a life. There are several types of heat-related conditions; two of the most serious are discussed below.

Heat exhaustion symptoms include headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, thirst, heavy sweating, elevated body temperature, fast or weak pulse, muscle cramps, cold, pale, clammy skin, and tiredness or weakness. If safe to do so, remove the person to a cooler area. Loosen tight clothing. Cool the body using wet cloths, misting, or fanning. Allow them to take small sips of water. Get medical help if vomiting occurs or symptoms last longer than an hour or get worse, or confusion develops.

Heat Stroke is the most severe. The person may be experiencing confusion, altered mental state, slurred speech, or loss of consciousness. They may have hot, dry skin or profuse sweating, seizures, and a high body temperature. Seek help immediately; this is an emergency; call 911. If it is safe, move the person to a cool area and remove outer clothing. Cool the person with cool clothes, misting, a cool bath, or fanning. Do not give the person anything to drink. Stay with the person until emergency medical services arrive.

If you have access to air conditioning in your home, stay indoors during the midday. If you don't have access to air conditioning, find some public place or a friend or relative's house where you can spend a few hours indoors. Take a cool bath or shower. Be sure to drink plenty of water, avoiding alcoholic beverages and caffeine. You may already be dehydrated if you wait until you're thirsty to drink water. Don't use your stove or oven if you have to during extreme heat. Dress in loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.

Lastly, pay attention to the weather alerts for your area. The National Weather Service will issue alerts in your area if the situation warrants it. The following alerts are from the National Weather Service.

Excessive Heat Warning—You need to act. The National Weather Service issues an Excessive Heat Warning within 12 hours of the beginning of extremely dangerous heat conditions. This means the heat index is expected to reach 105° F or higher for at least two days, and the overnight temperature will not drop below 75° F. You must take precautions to prevent illness or death.

Excessive Heat Watches—Prepare. This watch is issued when conditions are right for an extreme heat event in the next 24 to 72 hours. The timing of the event is still uncertain.

Heat Advisory—You need to act. A Heat Advisory is issued within 12 hours of the onset of hazardous heat conditions. The Advisory is issued when the heat index is expected to be above 100°F for at least two days, and the nighttime temperature will not drop below 75°F. You need to take precautions to avoid heat-related illnesses.

Knowing what to look for in extreme heat can help save someone's life. Be sure to look out for those who are more vulnerable. Check on your older family members and neighbors and watch out for the children.

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent, Family & Community Wellness

Keeping Food Safe When Traveling

It's summer and it seems we are all on the "road" traveling to feed farm help, going on vacations, or celebrating with family and friends at the lake. It is important to follow simple food safety tips when traveling. Make sure your "road" to food safety is smooth and not a bumpy one by following these tips:

Transport Food Safely:

- * Keep hot foods (140°F or higher) by wrapping them in foil, and then in heavy towels. Or carry them in insulated wrappers or containers designed to keep food hot.
- * Keep cold foods cold (40°F or lower) by placing them in a cooler with ice or freezer packs or an insulated container with a cold pack designed to keep food cold.

Upon Arrival:

- * Place cold foods in the refrigerator.
- * Place hot foods in an oven hot enough to keep the food at an internal temperature of 140°F or above; use a food thermometer to ensure the food stays at a safe internal temperature.
- * Plan to serve food shortly after guests have arrived.

Avoid the Danger Zone:

- * By keeping hot foods hot and cold food cold, you are avoiding the Danger Zone (temperatures between 40 - 140°F) where bacteria grows rapidly.
- * Perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs, and casseroles kept at room temperature for longer than 2 hours should be thrown out.
- * Ready-to-eat foods such as cookies, crackers, bread and whole fruit are exceptions to the Danger Zone.