

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Safety During Harvest

Travel almost anywhere in Northeast Kansas this time of year and you'll likely note the approach of harvest. It signifies not only the conclusion of a growing season, but also the start of a very busy time for producers. If we're not careful, it can become a dangerous time as well.

Injury prevention features on modern equipment are better than ever, but not failproof. Whether you're the operator or a casual observer, give a wide berth to moving equipment, particularly augers and power take off shafts. The snapping rolls on a combine pull in stalks at a rate of 12 feet per second –faster than you can react to pull away if you get too close. Stay away from moving/rotating equipment until the machine is shut off and can be safely approached.

Equipment operators should also be aware of fire hazards caused by residue buildup around engine/exhaust systems and concealed drive belts/pulleys. Regular equipment cleaning, including a check of electrical systems, is vital to help prevent potential issues. For an added measure of safety, start harvesting on the downwind side of the field when possible. If a fire occurs, flames will move towards the harvested portion of the field, reducing potential damage.

Safety equipment should include a cell phone, first aid kit, and fire extinguisher. Make sure fire extinguishers are properly charged and cell phones can be recharged through the day. Make note of poor cell phone coverage areas, when possible, sharing your harvesting plans including physical locations with your harvest crew and other family members. A little time updating can save a lot of precious response time later.

A vehicle traveling 65 miles per hour approaching a combine traveling at 15 miles per hour will cover and catch that combine in less than 20 seconds. Operators should be aware of fast approaching vehicles, making sure equipment hazard lighting is clean and in working order. Look ahead for 'emergency exits', giving yourself a place to go when an approaching vehicle doesn't allow for the same. Following equipment or semis on highways or county roads? Give equipment and yourself plenty of room. Pass only when safe to do so and be aware of vehicles entering and exiting the roadway to prevent approaching too quickly.

Be sure to take care of yourself as well. Take regular breaks to stop, stretch, and move around. Need 'time away' to refocus or get a break from harvest stresses? Carve out time to slow down and refresh. The marathon of harvest can feel like a sprint, but it will only be made worse if you or others around you are injured because of physical or mental fatigue.

Harvest is an awesome time. Plan now to make sure it starts *and* finishes that way.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Investing in the Operation

The old saying “don’t count your chickens before they hatch” comes to mind, but high calf prices being reported gives positive indication for possible profitability in the cow/calf sector in the coming months. Livestock producers often live on very thin margins and it is often a rare opportunity when there is extra capital to invest back into the operation. There is never a shortage of places to spend money, but following are some thoughts on places to invest profit. These are ten common questions one might ask, yours’ might be slightly different, but the time to ask them is now. Thinking ahead and coming up with a plan for profits can increase the long-term impact on operational profitability and sustainability.

1. Do you know if you even have a profit? If your current recordkeeping and/or accounting system is not what it should be to help you manage and make decisions, now might be the time to invest in accounting tools or hire a trained professional to help on money matters.
2. Is your balance sheet looking healthy? Talk to your lender, tax accountant or other financial managers who can help you evaluate your current financial position and address what potential income can mean for tax liability in 2023.
3. Need a tractor, pickup or other equipment upgrade? Now may be the time, but be careful. Cost like depreciation, interest, repairs, taxes, insurance, etc... often negatively affect long-term profitability. These investments need to help reduce expenses, not add to them.
4. What shape are your animal handling facilities in? Would improvements provide a safer environment and better working experience for animals and people alike? Could your chute be upgraded? Scales be added to track weights and correctly dose medication?
5. How are your watering systems? Do you have adequate water developments in pastures and pens? Water supply is critical and often a limiting factor for effective grazing management. Remote water monitoring system technology should be considered too.
6. Are fences doing their job and in the right place? Consider purchasing fencing supplies with extra funds. Permanent and flexible fencing strategies will give positive return on investment with improved grazing distribution and forage management.
7. Do you have the ability to store bulk commodities or other inputs? Often having the ability to buy truckloads of product gives a cost savings. Would an investment in this area reduce cost of production and provide more opportunity when purchasing inputs?
8. Happy with the productivity of pastures? Now is a good time to invest in soil fertility programs and pasture renovations such as reseeding, adding plant diversity, brush control and incorporating legumes, to improve the quantity and quality of forage production.
9. Have you been avoiding discussions of the future? If you’ve been putting off developing a business transition plan, now may be the time to invest in this process. Seek out and hire legal advice, if warranted, to review and evaluate estate and business plans.
10. When is the last time you gave yourself or employees a raise, bonus, or a vacation? Rewarding the commitment to those who contribute to the hard work of raising livestock will only help keep them encouraged and working hard. It is often family members who contribute blood, sweat and tears over long, hard hours, for little to no direct pay. Show them appreciation and recognize efforts in the good times to help through leaner times.

September 1, 2023

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

No article this week

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

HHS Announces First Drugs for Medicare Price Negotiation

Health and Human Services (HHS) has selected the first drugs for price negotiations for Medicare. These negotiations will begin in 2023 for ten drugs covered under Medicare Part D. One of the items included in the Inflation Reduction Act passed in 2022 was the ability for the federal government to negotiate prices with drug manufacturers. The selected drugs have a high cost and no generic option. After negotiations, the maximum fair prices will go into effect in 2026. Drugs in the first list include those that treat diabetes, blood clots, cancer, arthritis, and heart disease. Manufacturers will have until October 2, 2023, to submit data on their medication to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Below is a list of the first ten drugs up for negotiation.

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Drug Name	Manufacturer	Conditions Treated
Eliquis	Bristol Myers Squibb/Pfizer	Atrial fibrillation; blood clots
Xarelto	Johnson & Johnson	Atrial fibrillation; blood clots
Jardiance	Boehringer Ingelheim/Eli Lilly	Diabetes; heart failure
Januvia	Merck & Co.	Diabetes
Entresto	Novartis	Heart Failure
Farxiga	AstraZeneca	Diabetes; heart failure; chronic kidney disease
Imbruvica	Johnson & Johnson/ AbbVie	Blood Cancers
Novolog	Novo Nordisk	Diabetes
Enbrel	Amgen	Rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis
Stelara	Johnson & Johnson	Psoriasis; psoriatic arthritis; Crohn's disease; ulcerative colitis

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

According to CMS, the drugs selected account for \$50.5 billion in total Medicare Part D covered prescription drug costs, or 20% of total cost Part D costs between June 1, 2022, and May 31, 2023. Prices that are negotiated and agreed upon will be published in September 2024, and the prices will go into effect in January 2026. CMS will select 15 more drugs in 2027 and 2028 and up to 20 more in 2029.

Drug manufacturers that choose not to participate will be subject to financial penalties or have to stop participating in Medicare and Medicaid programs, which could lead to substantial revenue losses.

Just a reminder, many Medicare laws have changed because of the Inflation Reduction Act. Make sure that you review your Medicare choices annually. The Medicare Fall open enrollment period is just around the corner, October 15-December 7, 2023. The Meadowlark Extension District provides free Medicare Counseling through the Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) Program. We offer non-biased Medicare education. If you have questions about Medicare, please call one of our offices: Holton at 785-364-4125, Oskaloosa at 785-863-2212, or Seneca at 785-336-2184

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent, Family & Community Wellness

Back to School Getting Your Child Off to a Great Start

Summer is winding down; it's time to think about school again. As you pick out new clothes and backpacks, here are four back-to-school preparation that can make a real difference in your child's health and academic success this school year.

1. Get your child on a good sleep schedule with good sleep habits. During the summer, we often let our children stay up late. To avoid a grumpy child when school starts, begin the school sleep schedule a week before school begins. Children need 8-10 hours of sleep every night, so count back from when they need to wake up to find the right bedtime. Switching to a school routine may not be easy but healthy sleep habits will help them in the classroom this school year.
2. Plan healthy lunches and snacks. Use the end of summer to talk with your child about healthy food they can bring to school. If they get to pick their healthy foods, they are more likely to eat it.
3. Make an appealing homework place, and decide on a routine. They should have a quiet, well-lit, pleasant place to do their homework. For younger children, it should be where you can easily supervise, but not necessarily in the middle of family chaos. Decide together when your child will do homework. You can always change it up later if it doesn't work out, but have a plan.
4. Plan activities and downtime. It's important that your child be active, so signing up for a team sport or other physical activity can be a good idea. Be sure that there is enough time for homework and sleep. This is crucial for your child's mental health. Your child needs time to relax and play no matter what their age.

These may seem basic and simple but can get lost in the shuffle. These simple tasks can be very effective when families do them. So, give them a try. You'll be glad you did.