



K-STATE

Research and Extension

Walnut Creek District

District Newsletter

October, 2019

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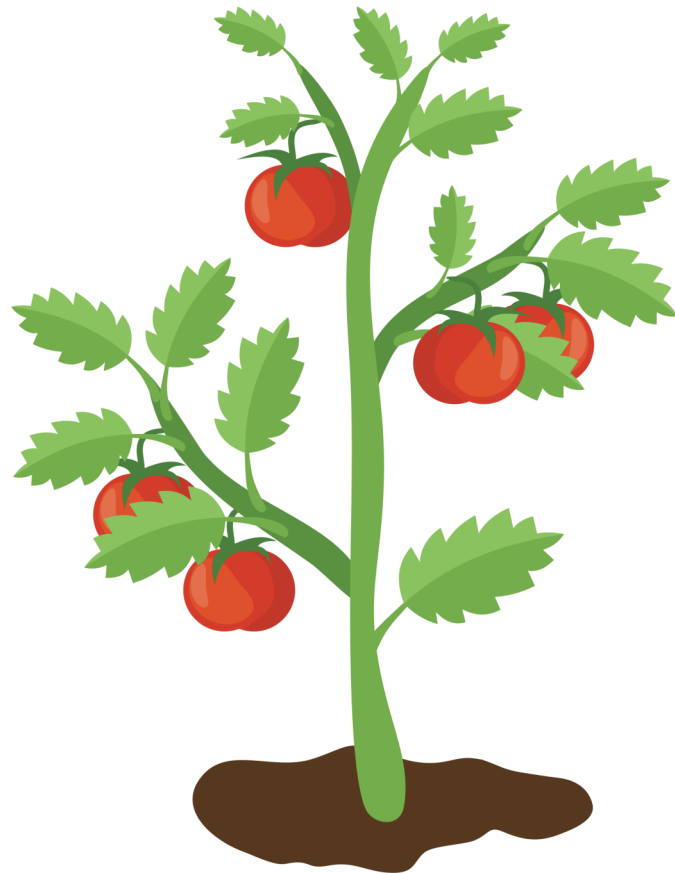
Last Tomatoes of the Season

Cooler nights are increasing in frequency now that we are into October. If you have tomatoes, you may have some that are approaching maturity. Leave them on the vine until mature or until a frost is forecast. Tomatoes will ripen off the vine but must have reached a certain phase of maturity called the 'mature green stage.' Look for full-sized tomatoes with a white star-shaped zone on the bottom end of the green fruit.

When harvesting fruit before a frost, separate tomatoes into three groups for storage:

- Those that are mostly red
- Those that are just starting to turn
- Those that are still green

Discard tomatoes with defects such as rots or breaks in the skin. Place the tomatoes on cardboard trays or cartons but use layers of newspaper to separate fruit if stacked. Occasionally a tomato may start to rot and leak juice. The newspaper will keep the juice from contacting nearby or underlying fruit. Store groups of tomatoes at as close to 55 degrees as possible until needed.



Should You Let Turf Grow Tall in the Fall?

Sometimes you will hear people say to let the grass grow tall right before winter sets in. Their reasoning is that the extra foliage will insulate the crown of the plant from the extreme cold of winter. Although this may sound reasonable, in practice it probably does little, if anything, to increase winter hardiness. On the contrary, a canopy that is too high during the winter may lay over and become matted down, leading to an increased incidence of winter diseases such as snow mold.

Turfgrass species vary genetically in their cold tolerance, with warm-season grasses such as bermudagrass, zoysiagrass and buffalograss being less cold tolerant than the cool-season types such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. Given these differences, cold tolerance is improved by increasing the health of the plants going into the winter, and healthy plants are a result of a sound management program, by fertilizing, watering and mowing, during the spring, summer and fall.

The lawn will benefit more from continuing to mow at the recommended height than from trying to gain some insulation against winter cold by allowing it to grow tall. Here is a list of the recommended mowing height ranges, in inches, for home lawns in Kansas:

Tall Fescue	2.5—3.5
Kentucky Bluegrass	2-3
Buffalograss	2-3
Bermudagrass	1-2
Zoysiagrass	1-2

There may be some benefits gained by adjusting mowing height WITHIN the recommended range at times. For example, it is a good practice to mow warm-season grasses at the higher end of recommended heights during late summer and early fall because this practice should help them store more carbohydrate reserves for the winter, and it may reduce the incidence of certain cool-weather diseases. However, the rule to remember is to stay within the recommended height range for your species.

Fall Soil Sampling: Sample Collection and Submission to K-State Soil Testing Lab

Soil testing provides producers and homeowners important information concerning the fertility status of the soil. This information can help produce better crops and reduce costs by guiding management decisions like the type and amount of fertilizers to apply. If you plan to do your own soil sampling and use the K-State Soil Testing Laboratory, the following outline provides specific information on methods for collecting soil samples and mailing instructions.

- To take a sample, you will need a probe, auger or spade, and a clean pail. (If you're also having the soil analyzed for zinc, be sure to use a plastic container to avoid contamination from galvanized buckets or material made of rubber.) You will also need soil sample containers and a soil information sheet from your local Extension office or fertilizer dealer.
- Draw a map of the sample area on the information sheet and divide your fields into uniform areas. Each area should have the same soil texture, color, slope, and fertilization and cropping history.
- From each area, take a sample of 20-30 cores or slices for best results. At the very minimum, 12-15 cores should be taken per sample. Mix the cores thoroughly in a clean container and fill your soil sample container. For available nitrogen, chloride, or sulfur tests, a sub-soil sample to 24 inches is necessary.
- Avoid sampling in old fencerows, dead furrows, low spots, feeding areas, or other areas that might give unusual results. If information is desired on these unusual areas, obtain separate sample from the area.
- Be sure to label the soil container clearly and record the numbers on the soil container and the information sheet.
- Air-dry the samples as soon as possible for the available nitrogen test.
- Fill out the information sheet obtained from your Extension office, or download a sheet.
- Sample may be sent directly to the lab by placing them in a shipping container.

Information sheets should be included with the package. Shipping labels can be printed from the Soil Testing Lab website listed below. Mail the package to:

Soil Testing Laboratory
2308 Throckmorton PSC
1712 Claflin Road
Manhattan, KS 66505-5503

A listing of the types of soil analysis offered, and the costs is available on the Soil Testing Lab Website, <https://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/services/soiltesting/>. You can also contact the lab by email at soiltesting@ksu.edu and by phone at 785-532-7897.



Benefit of Joining 4-H

October 6-12 is National 4-H Week, and October is time for recruitment of new members. We want you to come join us. In Walnut Creek District we have seven 4-H Clubs, reaching most of the communities in our area.

4-H was founded on the belief that when kids are empowered to pursue their passions and chart their own course their unique skills grow and take shape, helping them to become true leaders in their lives, careers and communities.

Kansas 4-H is open to all youth between the ages of 7 to 18 and we have a Cloverbud program for 5 and 6 year old youth. The new 4-H year starts October 1st. So now is the time to think about joining our youth development program.

Each of the four h's on the clover represent ways youth can grow and develop in 4-H. The four h's represent:

- ◆ Head—critical thinking and problem solving
- ◆ Heart—self-discipline, integrity and communication
- ◆ Hands—serving others
- ◆ Health—Choosing healthy lifestyles

Help us Celebrate
National 4-H Week
October 6-12
Inspire Kids To Do in 2019-2020

- ◆ Do Club Meetings and meet new friends
- ◆ Do Learning through Project Work
- ◆ Do Fun at Camp

As part of the 4-H experience, 4-H members are encouraged to learn about and contribute to their communities. 4-H also utilizes a variety of community resources to enhance the educational experience of members. If you have an idea or need for 4-H members to help with contact your local extension office, we are always looking for ways to give back.

In 4-H, youth “learn by doing.” Much of that learning happens through project experiences. From Beef to Bicycles, electricity to entomology, forestry to foods, photography to plant science, and rabbits to rockets. Kansas 4-H offers 36 project areas, designed to develop the wide range of interests and appeal to today’s young people. In addition to subject matter skills, many young people develop interests that last a lifetime.

Club participation, projects and friendships with other members become memorable parts of the 4-H program. Equally important are the skills that last a lifetime. Successful adults often credit their experiences in 4-H as a turning point in their lives.

4-H Alumni credit planning, organization and public speaking skills as essential to their success. Kansas 4-H has played a huge leadership role in identifying the five life skills most needed to help young people. Those five life skills are:

- ◆ A positive self-concept
- ◆ An inquiring mind
- ◆ A concern for the community
- ◆ Healthy interpersonal relationships
- ◆ Sound decision making

For more information about joining 4-H and the benefits of our program contact your local Extension Office.

Vocabulary Development through Reading

As a parent and/or primary caregiver, you have within your reach **THE KEY** to helping your child be smarter, happier and have a bright future. That key is language.

Talking, reading, singing with your child from the very start helps the brain develop. Even before your child is able to talk, they are learning from you continuously - and all your words now will help them become a capable reader later on.

The key is to start at birth. Immersing a child in abundant, rich language can be a stronger predictor of literacy and academic achievement than family income or a parent's level of education.

You can start with:

Talking: as you go about your everyday activities talk to your child. Tell them what you're doing, comment on what you're seeing as you drive the car, or shop for groceries. Ask questions as you go along and if your child is too young to respond, you can answer for them.

Reading: there's nothing more comforting than cuddling together with a book. You can do so much more than simply read the words. Talk about the pictures while pointing to them, use funny voices for the different characters, ask questions about the story. Most importantly, get into the habit of reading together every day.

Reading aloud to young children is not only one of the best activities to stimulate language and cognitive skills; it also builds motivation, curiosity, and memory. Children who are read to at



least three times a week by a family member are almost twice as likely to score in the top 25% in reading compared to children who are read to less than 3 times a week.

Singing/Rhyming: affects the brain in a way that helps prepare it for language. Songs and rhymes develop listening and thinking skills and provide a great foundation for literacy development.

The more words a child hears, the larger the child's vocabulary, and the larger the child's vocabulary, the more likely the child will be a proficient reader. Children's academic successes at ages 9 and 10 can be attributed to the amount of talk they hear from birth through age 3. The single most significant factor influencing a child's early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school.

For more information about Early Childhood Literacy and Reading to your children contact your local Extension Office.

FOR PARENTS: Why 4-H?

Benefits are Endless!

Learn new Skills!



FARM BILL MEETINGS

Farm Bill meetings have popped up around the state and there will be more to come as we get thru fall harvest. I hope to point out the major changes for the 2019 farm bill. Sign-up deadline is in March, so we recommend producers visit their FSA office after the first of the year. This will give us time to see what the 2019 Market Year Average will be and let the offices work thru the MFP programs as well as the initial stages of the new CRP sign-up. At the same time DO NOT wait till March 2020 to get signed up either, that will push the bounds the other way.

The Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs have continued with some modifications. Producers may make a new election to obtain either ARC or PLC for the 2019 and 2020 crop year. This first election is for 2 years then producers may change elections annually during the 2021, 22, & 23 crop years. Owners can update the farm's PLC payment yield beginning with the 2020 crop year. Strike prices for major crops are the same \$5.50 on wheat, \$3.95 on sorghum, \$3.35 on corn, and \$8.40 on soybeans. If tenancy is on shares, both owner and tenant have to have a consensus on the program of choice. Tenant's with cash leases get to make the call.

We will still have a 5 year average to look at. Last time we signed up there were some pretty good historical numbers and now we have had depressed prices for a number of years, so the average is more the norm. When there is a bad year, we now have an 80% plug to insert and instead of relying on NASS (National Ag Statistics) we will now base production on the RMA data, so reporting will be more consistent. Producers will also have the opportunity to update yields which will be important considering our strong production from the last few years.

The Direct Farm Ownership loan limit is increased and the Guaranteed Farm Ownership loan limit is increased. A farmer or rancher may now receive both a Farm Ownership Microloan and an Operating Microloan. Previously, microloans were limited to a combined total of \$50,000 for both.

Buy-up coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) is now part of permanent program authorization. Service fees for applications for coverage have increased, while the premium amounts for buy-up NAP coverage are unchanged.

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, and the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) remain authorized and have minimal changes.

To help decipher the numbers, go to AgManager.info, towards the left side there is a pull down under Ag Policy. There you will find several items that include current MYA estimates, the KSU/OSU decision tool and historical charts from the previous cycle.

On a similar note there will be a CRP sign-up coming towards the end of the year. Payments are capped, so deciding which acres to enroll and which acres to keep in production is going to take some thought. Historically we have seen tens of thousands of acres in our district enrolled and that won't be the case this time, but it is still a consideration on highly erodible or hard to manage acres.



by **Jared Petersilie and Justin Waggoner, Beef Systems Specialist, Garden City**

Many of the challenge's cattle producers face are essentially about managing variability. Our management decisions/practices are often dictated by changes in weather, markets, genetics, animal performance and many other factors. Today we often think of complex tools like EPDs or genomic testing. However, simple tools such as body condition scoring and analytical testing of feeds are also tools that should be included in this list. Although it is often overlooked, the underlying reason we evaluate the chemical composition of feedstuffs is to gather data that can be used to more efficiently manage our feed resources and more accurately predict animal performance.

Nutritionist and producers often use average values when discussing feeds and forages (i.e. alfalfa: 55% TDN, 16% Crude Protein). Feedstuffs, especially forages can vary widely in their nutrient composition due to various factors including forage species, stage of maturity at harvest, weather conditions during the growing season, and weather conditions between swathing and baling. The variability in the chemical composition is often much greater than most realize, even for forages such as straw, which are relatively homogenous.

This growing season producers have experienced the full spectrum of weather conditions from a cold, wet spring, to a lack of rainfall that has some regions back on the drought monitor. These conditions have affected the quality of harvested forages in many different ways. In some cases where harvest was delayed, forage quality may be well below the average values. Utilizing these forages based on their average or "normal" values may negatively influence animal performance. Forage testing is the tool that producers need to take out of the management toolbox this fall. Just like an EPD or body condition scoring, forage testing is a tool. Stop and consider, "Would you purchase or select a sire without using the tools science has developed to help you make the best management decisions?"

All three offices in the Walnut Creek have probes and we can send samples in a number of ways. When sending those samples in, please get at least a roughage test or general test (names vary depending on the lab used) so that you are provided with energy amounts. Protein and Nitrates are important and widely used, but only part of the equation. Remember last winter when cows were burning thru bales, stalks and everything else you put in front of them and still seemingly starving? They need energy to make body heat. We are happy to help with balancing rations, explaining test results, and most importantly making use of the feed you have.

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Walnut Creek District

Walnut Creek District
presents

61st Annual Ag Tour
Bus Trip to Nebraska

CHANGE OF DATE
October 28-30, 2019

Contact (785) 222-2710 or jaredp11@ksu.edu

Feed and Opens

The USDA Animal Health System says that less than 25% of producers will perform pregnancy detection in their beef herds. Various reasons exist from: time and labor to cost and accessibility of the cows, but our time feeding and expenses for doing so are going to far out-weigh those reasons. On a whole, we have been blessed with moisture, some could definitely use more and are looking at the drought monitor; at the same time others saw flooding while getting too much. Just so happens we have both in the same three county area. Regardless, we have replenished our total feed stock pile and barring a fall like last year, hope to get most of it put up in silage or bales. Lots of grass from wide spread spring rains also helps. However, there are many areas in the Central Plains region (within trucking distance) that are not as fortunate. They had too much rain and long term flooding this spring and summer or it turned off way hotter and drier to our south and west. Either case is going to keep the cost of forages on a higher plain. Last year was a good example, Kansas was an anomaly in moisture-wet in the west and dry in the East. We were able to produce adequate forage and market some as well.

Now when we look at shear feed costs and the carrying cost for a cow we can see that alleviating the dead weight (i.e. open cows) now will pay dividends later on. The sale of cull cows equates to about 15% of a livestock operations gross revenue. Our current market price for cull cows is pretty good. Granted most producers are more engrossed with getting wheat drilled, crops harvested, and etc. but given the opportunity of a few wet days, don't overlook the value of early culling.

Pregnancy checking can take many forms, blood testing, ultra-sound, or palpation. All are effective and each has their benefits. Regardless of the means of testing, 30-35 days into gestation is all it takes for each to work and by the time you read this we will be midway thru October. Any spring calving female bred in the last 45 days won't calve till mid-June.

Forage needs can be figured roughly by a percent of body weight. Cows will usually consume 1.5-2% of their body weight, good feed moves the consumption higher. If a 1300# dry cow is eating hay with 8% protein, she will consume about 25 lbs per day at 100% dry matter. As the moisture increases the resulting pounds will also increase. This isn't a big swing until we start analyzing silage or baleage, then water weight is considerable. Hay waste is a bigger concern. Many studies peg the loss at 5-20% depending on feed quality, type of feeder, and type of delivery. If we tack on 10-15% waste that brings the total to almost 30 lbs. delivered per day. Lactating cows consume considerably more, but removing the old, open, or ornery will save a lot of feed. This gives us a benchmark for what seems to be a moving target for hay storage. The more we can graze the longer we can offset this, but winters like last year can and do happen and being prepared is key.

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