

WALNUT CREEK EXTENSION DISTRICT

December 2025 Newsletter



Upcoming Dates

Medicare Part D (SCHICK) Appointments - call
Kristen before Dec. 5 at 785-798-3921

December Dates

- 2 - Ness Co. New 4-H Families - 6 pm
- 3 - Rush Co. New 4-H Families - 6 pm
- 3 - Lane County 4-H Cloverbuds - 4:00 pm
- 3 - K-State Garden Hour Webinar Series @ Noon
- 3 - Beginning Farmer Conference - Garden City
- 4 - Beginning Farmer Conference - Colby
- 8 - Monday Fun Day - Dighton
- 9 - Crop Pest Management School - Colby
- 10 - Crop Pest Management School - Hays
- 17 - Rush Co. 4-H Photography 4 pm
- 18 - Lane Co. 4-H Photography 4 pm
- 19 - Ness Co. 4-H Photography 4 pm

**WCED Offices Closed - December 24, 2025 thru
January 2, 2026**

Looking Ahead

- January 15 - Ag Profitability Conference - Hays
- February 3-Ag Profitability Conference-Garden City
- February 12-13 - Women Grow the Farm
- February 21 - District 4-H Club Days held in Ness City this year

Lane County Office

144 S. Lane, Courthouse
P O Box 487
Dighton, KS 67839
620-397-2806

- Lacey Noterman, Director and Agriculture Ext. Agent - lnote@ksu.edu
- Chelsey Shapland, 4-H Program Assistant - cshapland@ksu.edu

Ness County Office

503 S Pennsylvania Ave
Ness City, KS 67560
785-798-3921

- Robyn Trussel, 4-H and Youth Agent - rdeines@ksu.edu
- Kristen Schmidt, Family Comm. Wellness - kbschmidt@ksu.edu
- Randae Rufenacht, Office Professional - rrufenac@ksu.edu

Rush County Office

702 Main, P O Box 70
Lacrosse, KS 67548
785-222-2710

- Jared Petersilie, Agriculture Ext. Agent - jaredp11@ksu.edu
- Berny Unruh, Office Professional bunruh@ksu.edu

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Grazing Crop Residues with Excess Downed Grain

By Jason Warner, Cow-calf Specialist and Jared Petersilie, WCED agent

As fall harvest wraps up with strong yields and nearly ideal weather, many corn and grain sorghum fields now offer excellent opportunities for winter grazing. Even in fields where mud, ergots, or weed pressure left more standing grain than usual, residues can still be grazed safely and economically with the right management.

Type of Grain and Degree of Attachment to the Plant

The milo kernel has a very hard outer coating and it also has a slower rate and lower extent of digestion than corn. Thus, the relative level of risk of acidosis or founder is lower for grain sorghum compared to corn. In order for the starch in either grain to be fully available to the microbes in the rumen, the kernels must be cracked or processed. While the rumination, or “cud chewing”, activity allows this to happen, the process of starch digestion is generally slower when the animal masticates the grain to break the kernel and is also consuming some forage from the plant at the same time. Situations in which there are piles of loose grain when the grain cart is overfilled or someone overshot the truck pose a much greater risk of animal losses than corn grain still in the ear or milo still attached to the head.



Jared Petersilie

Extension Agent
Animal Sciences
Farm Management
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Determining How much Grain is on the Ground

An estimate of the amount of grain down or on the field surface can be challenging to assess, but it is very important. A field with 10 bushels per acre down is a much different situation than one with 75 bushels per acre on the field. In general, levels greater than 10 to 15 bushels per acre require additional caution and management. Estimates from yield maps in the combine can be helpful to identify areas in the field of concern. A simple method from colleagues at the University of Nebraska for determining the amount of downed corn is to measure out 3 different 100' long strips in the field, add up the number of 8" ear equivalents and divide the number of ears by 2 to get approximate bushels per acre. For example, if strip 1 contained 4 – 8" ear equivalents, strip 2 contained 2.5 – 8" ear equivalents, and strip 3 contained 1.5 – 8" ear equivalents, then it would equate to 4 bushels per acre ($4 + 2.5 + 1.5 \div 2$).

Cattle Experience Influences Risk

Older cows familiar with grazing residues tend to search out grain first, often overeating during the first few days and trampling usable forage. To reduce risk, it may be beneficial to let naïve or younger animals—such as weaned calves or replacement heifers—graze high-grain areas first. Because they typically eat more conservatively, this strategy can reduce the chance of overconsumption when experienced cows enter the field later.

Animal and Field Management

I encourage producers to consider strip grazing fields every year, but when we see 10 to 15 bushels per acre remaining, it's more important. While this does increase the need for fence material and labor to move the fence, it does reduce the risk of acidosis/founder because the increased stocking density reduces grazing selectivity. Always fill animals up with hay or pasture grazing prior to turning them into the field to avoid them being hungry and grazing aggressively upon turnout. Turning out after lunch, when cows would typically be resting also helps. Dividing up a field retains plant material that will boost nutrition each time a new portion is opened up. That could be per week, per month, or even just one division when a field is cut in half. Water access is the biggest hurdle in getting this accomplished.

Feeding and Supplementation Recommendations

In high-risk fields, introducing supplemental grain 10 to 14 days before turnout can help cattle adapt to the starch they will encounter. Start with 0.25% of body weight and increase gradually to 0.5%. Providing palatable hay during grazing can substitute for some grain intake and reduce the risk of digestive upset. Protein supplementation also improves residue utilization, especially when using non-protein nitrogen sources like urea or biuret. Including an ionophore further enhances safety and efficiency by improving rumen fermentation.



Robyn Trussel

4-H Youth
Development
Agent
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Less Stress and More Holiday Connection

The holiday season is always full of Hustle and Bustle! Here are some warm and practical tips to help your family get through the holidays with less stress and more connection. Let's not just spoil our kids this holiday season but support them.

Kids thrive on predictability, try to keep them anchored by sticking to regular bedtimes, meals and working in quiet time; this will help with meltdowns, anxiety and overstimulation.

Holiday excitement plus sugar, plus crowds equals big feelings. Gentle reminders of your expectations can help keep the atmosphere positive. Ideas such as please use your kind words, check in before leaving the area, and use your inside voice are great reminders before large gatherings.

Ever feel like your space is being invaded for the holidays, help your kids figure out a respective way to adjust to all the hugs and overly affectionate relatives.

Let them know a verbal greeting and stepping away is okay, depending on the generation maybe a high five or fist bump is also acceptable.

Use the season to teach gratitude and empathy. Have kids help choose a gift to donate, write thank you notes for gifts received, let kids help bake something for the neighbors. These acts will help build long term prosocial behavior and will help you connect with your kiddos.

Kids will lean on screens over break, and that's normal. Set simple boundaries instead of battling them each day. No screens in the morning, moderate screen time in the afternoon, and a family-oriented activity with no screens in the evening is a great plan.

Holiday perfection is an adult idea, kids want connection, fun and low pressure. Remember you may be making messy memories and not picture-perfect moments. Taking time to layout the plan, have conversations along the way and celebrating the traditions of the season will help reduce the craziness of the holidays.

Happy
Holidays



Save the Date! K-State Junior Producer Days Scheduled

The 2026 K-State Junior Producer Days have been scheduled. The dates are provided below. We host two junior producer days each year, with beef and sheep in even years and swine and meat goat in odd years. So, we will be hosting a junior beef and sheep producer day next spring. These are one-day, educational events focused on a specific species for families, extension agents, and ag teachers to learn about the selection and management of youth livestock projects. All ages and skill levels are invited to attend!

Registration information will be released in the next few weeks. Once released, updates will be emailed to those on the YLP listserv, posted on the youth livestock program Facebook page, as well as added to the junior producer days page of youth livestock program website, which is under the events tab.

K-State Junior Beef Producer Day – Saturday, March 7, 2026

K-State Junior Sheep Producer Day – Saturday, April 11, 2026



CELEBRATE
your mistakes
it means
you're
Learning



Japan Exchange Host Families Needed

Families looking for a new experience for summer 2026? Host a Japanese delegate in the comforts of your own home while exploring the world. Thirty teens from Japan are needing host families this summer. The Japanese delegate will be in Kansas from July 21 to August 16, but families are needed for hosting from July 23 to August 15. Host families are needed who would be willing to host a Japanese boy or girl. The Japanese youth will be between the ages of 12 and 16. Our responsibility is to make host family assignments matching each delegate with an American same-gender host sibling as soon as possible so that families and exchange delegates can communicate and get to know each other.



Any Kansas family with children aged 9-17 who is interested in the Japanese culture may host. A separate bed is required, but not necessarily a separate room from the host sibling. Delegates are 100 percent medically covered with 4-H insurance and bring their own spending money for souvenirs. They can go on host family vacations, camping trips, or join their host sibling for summer camps and the county fair. The focus is on everyday family life as the delegate becomes part of your family. The delegates' information is to be available in February 2026.

If you have further questions, please call Pam Van Horn, Kansas 4-H Japanese Exchange Coordinator, 785-826-8917, or e-mail pvanhorn@ksu.edu.

Tis the Season for Unwanted Germs

With the holidays upon us, let's keep ourselves and our loved ones safe and healthy. Handwashing with soap is one of the best ways to do that.

Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. Germs can spread from person to person or from surfaces to people.

Here are some key times to wash hands:

- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before and after eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal food or treats, and animal waste
- After touching garbage

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Follow these steps every time:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or an air dryer.

Use hand sanitizer when you can't use soap and water. Although washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs, sometimes soap and water is not readily available. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol as an alternative.



Kristen Schmidt
Family and
Community
Wellness Agent
kbschmidt@ksu.edu



K-State food scientist shares tips for mailing holiday food gifts

If you're thinking about mailing food gifts for the holidays this year, there are some extra precautions you should plan for beforehand, according to Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee. Additional information can be found in this news release: <https://ksre-learn.com/mailling-food-gifts-25>

Karen Blakeslee also publishes a monthly newsletter: <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter/index.html>

Choosing a Fresh Christmas Tree

If you purchase your Christmas tree from a garden store or roadside lot, there's a good chance it traveled from out of state. During transport, many trees are exposed to drying winds, which can shorten their shelf life compared to a tree you cut down yourself. No matter where your tree comes from, it's helpful to know how to select the freshest one possible.

Tips for Selecting a Fresh Tree

- Look for a vibrant green tree with minimal browning.
- Choose trees displayed in the shade rather than those sitting in direct sunlight.
- Check the needles—they should feel pliable, not brittle, and should stay on the branch.
- Test for needle retention by lifting the tree a few inches and letting it drop gently. Very few green needles should fall off.

Selecting a fresh, healthy tree will help it last longer and stay beautiful throughout the holiday season!



Lacey Noterman
District Director
Agronomy/
Horticulture
lnote@ksu.edu



K-State Garden Hour is hosted by K-State Research and Extension horticulture staff across the state of Kansas. We hope you'll join us on the first Wednesday of each month at noon for some horticultural refreshment and training. Sessions are recorded and posted here after each event. Join us for our webinar series. Noon-1pm CST. 45-minute presentation with 15 minutes for questions.
<https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>

Sign up and you will be notified with an email for Wednesday, December 3rd and for the 1st Wednesdays in 2026

Bringing Plants Indoors? Here's How to Keep Them Healthy

With colder weather arriving, many gardeners are moving cold-sensitive plants indoors. Follow these tips to minimize stress and keep your plants thriving:

1. Transition Slowly: Gradually reduce light exposure to prevent shock, which can cause yellowing, wilting, or dieback.
2. Water & Fertilizer: Water only when the soil is dry about an inch deep. Apply fertilizer at $\frac{1}{4}$ the normal rate in November and again in February.
3. Temperature & Humidity: Keep plants above 50°F and provide higher humidity when possible to prevent leaf loss.
4. Light: Provide bright, indirect light from windows or grow lights. Signs of insufficient light include stretched stems, pale new leaves, or dieback of older foliage.



NW KS 4-H AG AMBASSADORS
PRESENT THE

AG & STEM YOUTH DAY CAMP

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6TH, 2025

1 - 4:30 PM

Wheatland High School
2920 K-23
Grainfield, KS 67737

- RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 7-13
- OPEN TO ANY YOUTH!
- FUN GROUP ACTIVITIES
- HANDS-ON, AMBASSADOR-LED STATIONS INCLUDE:
 - BUTTER & DAIRY FUN
 - DRONES & AG TECHNOLOGY
 - AGRICULTURAL BYPRODUCTS
 - SOIL HEALTH & EROSION
 - EMBRYOLOGY
- SNACK SERVED!



\$15/YOUTH

Pay at the door.

Register by Dec. 3rd!

Scan me to register,
or visit:
https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a5n40H1bB6ca9kG



For questions, contact:
Twin Creeks Extension District-Graham County
785.421.3411 or jenileem@ksu.edu

K-STATE
Research and Extension



DANE G. HANSEN
FOUNDATION

K-State Research and Extension is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American Sign Language) may be requested by contacting Jenilee Godsey two weeks prior to the start of the event, December 8, 2025 at jenileem@ksu.edu or 785-421-3411. Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

Online registration is available at: <https://bit.ly/KSUCropPest>

K-State Crop Pest Management Schools

focused on weeds, insects and diseases in western and central Kansas

December 9 - Colby

City Limits Convention Center

December 10 – Hays

K-State Western Kansas Research Center
Auditorium

December 12 – Concordia

Cloud County Fairgrounds Commercial
Building

Who should attend?

1A commercial applicators,
agronomy professional and
farmers

For 1A Commercial Applicators, 7
credits and 1 core hour have been
applied for

For CCAs, 8 pest management credits
have been applied for

Planning to attend?

\$50, if registered by Dec 2

\$75, if registered after Dec 2

<https://bit.ly/KSUCropPest>

Scan to
register



Our schedule:

- 7:45 Registration
 - 8:05 Welcome
 - 8:15 **Navigating the Weather**
Chip Redmond, K-State Meteorologist &
Mesonet Manager
 - 9:10 **Water Quality, Spray Mixtures and Weed Control**
Jeremie Kouame, K-State Weed Scientist
 - 10:05 Break
 - 10:20 **Is it Viral? Wheat Diseases to Watch For**
Kelsey Andersen Onofre, K-State Wheat
Pathologist
Jeanne Falk Jones, K-State NW Agronomist
 - 11:15 **Herbicides in Dry Environments and Label Updates**
Sarah Lancaster, K-State Weed Scientist
 - 12:10 Lunch
 - 12:50 **Making Pest Management Decisions**
K-State Northwest Extension Agents
 - 1:45 **Fall Armyworms, Grasshoppers and Others to Scout**
Anthony Zukoff, K-State Entomologist
 - 2:40 Break
 - 2:55 **The Label Game**
Sarah Lancaster, K-State Weed Scientist
 - 3:50 **Kansas Regulations (Core Hour)**
Kansas Dept of Ag
 - 5:00 Adjourn
- * Slightly different schedule in Concordia

Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact Jeanne Falk Jones, 785-462-6281.

Stay Strong, Stay Healthy



Build a stronger, healthier you!



Join this strength training class, twice a week for one-hour and improve your health.

- Increase your overall fitness, flexibility and balance.
- Build muscle and increase bone density to reduce frailty, osteoporosis and the risk of falls.
- Meet new people.
- Take home a handy exercise guide to continue the program.

Exercise equipment is provided in class.



an equal opportunity/ADA institution

CLASS DETAILS

Classes Begin January 6, 2026

When: Tuesdays/Thursdays
9:30 a.m.

Where: Ness City Leisure Years
422 N. Topeka

Hosted By: Kristen Schmidt
Family and Community Wellness Agent

REGISTER NOW!

Cost: \$20

Space is limited-Sign Up Today!

For more information or to sign up contact
Kristen at 785-798-3921 or stop by the office at
503 S. Penn

K-STATE
Research and Extension

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Family Meals in a Snap



Join us for a fun and practical session on how to make family meals easier, healthier, and less stressful!

This class is perfect for anyone interested in learning how to prepare and consume healthy meals at home.

What You'll Learn:

- Quick and healthy meal planning tips
- How to stretch your grocery budget
- Creative ways to use leftovers
- Families will leave with supper to-go for 6

Date: Saturday January 17th, 2026

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location: Ness County Fairgrounds 4-H Building

Get Registered to attend: Stop in our office at 503 S. Penn. \$15.00/family due at sign-up.

Deadline to register is Monday January 12th.

6 family minimum. If class is cancelled, money will be refunded

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension
Walnut Creek District

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K-State Ag Profitability Conferences: Making "Cents" of a Shifting Ag Economy

9 locations across Kansas | December 9, 2025 to February 5, 2026

Farmers and ranchers are no strangers to adversity, but today's challenges are testing the resilience of Kansas agriculture. Ongoing trade disputes and tariffs have disrupted markets and reduced export opportunities, driving crop prices lower while input costs for seed, fertilizer, and equipment remain high. The result is tighter margins and tougher decisions for many Kansas producers.

This program will provide an overview of the current farm financial situation and explore strategies to manage expenses, monitor markets for pricing opportunities, and make the most of safety nets programs like crop insurance and government commodity programs.

Specialists will also discuss:

- Trends in Kansas land values
- Tools for managing farm stress
- Considerations for retirement or transitioning the farm to the next generation

More information, dates/locations, and to register go to

www.AgManager.info/profitability

