

MEADOWLARK EXTENT DISTRICT WEEKLY NEWS FROM AGENTS

Jody G Holthaus

Meadowlark Extension District Agent

Livestock-Natural Resources

Tis the season, for holiday preparation. As usual, I'm doing the majority of the shopping, cooking, decorating and what not. After 30 some years of marriage, we still don't have all the bugs worked out. For instance, after Keith had some more pipe fence installed, he thought "we" should paint it. By "we" he meant, "me". I guess he ended up helping one afternoon. The best part, he announced that we were having a "painting party" to the family, and they went MIA pretty fast. The party was to begin at 2 pm, to try and get it done before dark and before the weather got colder. Funny thing was, Keith didn't show until after 4 pm, when the paint was gone and the painting done. So much for the party, but I can remind him of that when the house needs vacuumed.

With all this busyness, I still stop and make supper. But that has been easier these days, I went to one of Chef Ali's freezer meal sessions. It was part of a training for linking consumers to food, sponsored by the Farm Bureau. It was great to see all of the teachers there, so they can teach their students about Agriculture. In less than an hour, I had four meals made up to freeze for later use. Gosh are they good, we might get use to this!

Get used to the changes coming for the Veterinary Feed Directive. As I was sitting at the last meeting we had in Seneca. I was mistakenly thinking, "won't affect me until I can't buy CTC in the mineral". Then it dawns on me, that medicated milk replacer is one of the VFD changes. I will have to have a written directive from the veterinarian in order to purchase this. If we happen to have an orphaned calf, or one that needs a bit more to supplement them, I'm going to need milk replacer. If you are in this situation, get on the phone and get your written directive, now. With my luck, we'd need the replacer on a weekend, after the clinic closes! Which brings to mind, my gift ideas for the beef producer. I've always thought of making up a calving kit for Keith for Christmas. I would include the calving ob straps, the nylon kind that don't hurt the calf as bad. Those were a big demand item after our last calving school. Since Dr Dave Rethorst is presenting this school on December 15th, I should probably get some more on hand. If you'd like to attend the calving school at 6:30 pm at the Jackson county fair building, give me a call. Space is limited.

The kit could also have in it, besides the ear tags and tagger, the bander, with lots of new bands, ob lube if you need to help a bit, towels, latex gloves, a flashlight, iodine for the navel and whatever else I can think of.

Of course, flashlights are going to be obsolete at our house. Keith and the electrician have gone crazy, with the new LED space lights. We can now "light up to the tree line", like that is a good thing. NASA has probably seen our place show up in the last few weeks.

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David Hallauer

Meadowlark Extension District Agent

Crops & Soils/Horticulture

What's that Shrub?

Bush Honeysuckle. Road ditches are full of it. Wooded areas are being invaded by it! The bright red berries and still green foliage sure make it stand out! Unfortunately, for as much fall/winter color as the berries provide, bush honeysuckle species – Amur or Tartarian for us in eastern Kansas – are actually invasive, and have fast become a real nuisance for landowners.

The very noticeable berries are clustered around the stem and until this last cold snap, the leaves have kept a bright green color. Growing anywhere from six to over twenty feet in height, the one-time landscape shrub has become a serious understory invader from here to Ohio. In fact, some states have even included it on their noxious weed lists!

We have some native honeysuckles, so what's the problem? While the native honeysuckles are vining (think Japanese honeysuckle), the bush structure of these invasive honeysuckles makes them more competitive. Add to that the fact that their extended growing season (they tend to leaf out much earlier than other trees and shrubs and stay green well in to the fall) gives them a huge competitive advantage over native species. Because of their vigorous growth, they can take over a woodland understory, reducing the number of native woodland wildflowers and other shrubs. The bottom line is this: if you want to promote native species on your property, then controlling bush honeysuckles is needed!

Multiple control options are available. They aren't that deep rooted, so honeysuckle seedlings can be readily hand pulled when soil is damp. Once they get much size or if infestations are large, chemical control might be a necessity. Foliar applications of glyphosate (i.e., Roundup) in late summer and fall work well as do applications of Crossbow (2,4-D + triclopyr).

If you do try controlling by cutting, be sure and treat the stumps (cutting alone results in lots of resprouting!!). Treat cut stump areas with Tordon RTU (picloram), or concentrated (20% - 50%) glyphosate. Several studies have shown basal spraying with triclopyr (Garlon) not to be effective, while basal applications with 2,4-D or picloram products work well, using an oil carrier to penetrate the bark. Cut stump and basal treatments can be done when the areas to be sprayed are dry and not frozen. Always follow all label instructions when using pesticides!

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Cindy Williams
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Food and Nutrition, FNP

Slow Cooker Safety

Imagine walking in the door on a cold day greeted by the pleasant aroma of your evening meal simmering in your slow cooker. A slow cooker can be a very convenient method of food preparation for busy families.

Besides convenience, slow cookers can save time, effort, and energy usage, and may even enrich your nutrition. However, it's important to ensure your slow cooker is safe to use and that you are following food safety guidelines for slow cooking.

It's important to know your slow cooker. Slow cookers cook food slow enough for unattended cooking, but fast enough to keep food out of the temperature danger zone (40-140°F) where bacteria multiplies the fastest.

To test your slow cookers' safety, fill your slow cooker one-half to two-thirds full of tap water, cover, and heat on low for 8 hours. Then, quickly check the water temperature with a food thermometer as the temperature can quickly drop when the lid is removed.

Your thermometer should read at least 185°F. If the temperature of the water is below 185°F, you should replace your slow cooker, as it is unsafe.

NEVER add frozen meat or poultry to your slow cooker as these foods will most likely stay in the temperature danger zone too long. Safely thaw all meats and poultry before cooking them in the slow cooker, and be sure your liquids almost cover them to ensure effective heat transfer throughout the cooking process.

It's also important to take the temperature of your meats and poultry at the thickest part, with a food thermometer. Steaks, chops, roasts and seafood should be cooked to 145°F, ground beef and pork should be cooked to 160°F, and all poultry should be cooked to 165°F.

Most slow cookers have two or three settings, including a low setting where food generally needs 8-10 hours to cook, and a high setting which can cook food in 4-6 hours. If possible, set your slow cooker on high for the first hour, then turn to low for be sure your slow cooker is heated before adding ingredients.

Throughout the cooking process it is important to leave the lid on. Removing the lid decreases the cooking temperature and adds time to the cooking process. When cooking with your slow cooker, add vegetables first (since they cook slower than meat and poultry), followed by meats and poultry, liquids, and other ingredients.

Lastly, it is important to never overfill your slow cooker. Ideally, your slow cooker should be filled anywhere from one-half to three-fourths full.

After the cooking process has finished be sure to wash and rinse your crockpot and all cooking utensils with hot, soapy water. Do not leave cooked food in the crockpot to cool down. Transfer food to small shallow containers and refrigerator immediately.

NEVER reheat foods in your slow cooker. Safely heat leftovers in the oven, microwave or on the stove until they reach 165°F. Eat or freeze leftovers within 3-4 days.

MEADOWLARK EXTENT DISTRICT WEEKLY NEWS FROM AGENTS

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Family Life

Car Seat Safety Reminders

Car seat safety is of the utmost importance for protecting your child during even the shortest of travels. However, knowing how to safely secure your growing child can be difficult. Being a first time grandparent, our family has revisited this topic. Here are common mistakes made with car seats and how to prevent them.

Buying a used car seat without knowing about it. If you can afford it, avoid used car seats. However, considering the reality of the expense of having a child, some people may choose a used car seat. If you do, make sure the car seat comes with instructions and a label showing the manufacture date and model number. Make sure it has not been recalled by checking the model and date here:

<http://www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/recalls/childseat.cfm>

Also, make sure it is not expired or more than six years old, has no visible damage, has all of its parts, and has never been in a crash. If you don't know the car seat's history, don't use it!

Placing the car seat in the wrong spot. The safest place for your child's car seat is the back seat, away from active air bags. Please note that this is a different place to put a child than many of us grew up with. Always put your child in the back seat, away from the airbags in the front.

Check your car manufacturer's recommendations for placing your child in the back seat. Some recommend placing her in the middle, and some recommend placing her behind either the driver's or passenger's seat.

Using the car seat as a replacement crib. A car seat is to designed to protect your child during travel. Do not let your child sleep or relax in the car seat for long periods of time out of the car, as this is unhealthy for him. Some research has indicated that sitting upright in a car seat might compress a newborn's chest and lead to lower levels of oxygen. Even mild airway obstruction can impair a child's development. Sitting in a car seat for lengthy periods can also contribute to the development of a flat spot on the back of your baby's head and worsen gastroesophageal reflux disease.

Incorrectly installing the car seat or buckling up your child. When you install a car seat, read both the manufacturer's instructions, and the vehicle owner's manual car seat recommendations. Make sure that it is facing the correct direction for the size of your child. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children should be rear-facing until they outweigh the manufacturer's guidelines for their model of car seat.

Dressing your child in bulky outerwear. Harness straps might not provide enough protection over a baby's bulky outerwear. If it's cold, put your baby or young child in a lightweight jacket and hat. Buckle the harness snugly and then tuck a warm blanket around him. Saving the bulky outerwear for outdoors is not only safer for car seats, but your child will be warmer when she puts on that extra layer before going into the cold.