

Fenceline

by Jody G. Holthaus

Meadowlark Extension District Agent

Livestock-Natural Resources

Don't Rush the Season!

I saw on the Internet, that each Christmas tree that goes up before Thanksgiving, an elf shoots a reindeer! Now that's consequences.

Back in the good ole days, when our office was in the courthouse, I used to give the custodians trouble when the Christmas decorations would go up. It seemed that each year they did it earlier and earlier. I especially liked to find the Christmas tree, abandoned. I "might" have hidden the top from Cheryl and Teresa a time or two. I think the tradition caught on, and I wasn't the only one giving them trouble. So this year when the town square was going to turn on the lights the second Friday of the month, I faced a real dilemma. We felt obligated to decorate our door and entrance. Of course I got an earful about being a hypocrite. Post-election season, tis the season for that too!

We have some exciting stuff coming up! We have planned a Deer School, with our KSU Wildlife Specialist, Charlie Lee. Charlie is going to talk about antler growth and deer nutrition. If you are into deer habitat, he will tell you how to grow the big bucks. Then we will have a representative from Kansas Wildlife Parks and Tourism tell us about the deer population and the effects of these diseases. They tell me there are a lot less deer, my night time sightings haven't decreased. Plus the blood stains on the highway beg to differ, but I'll keep an open mind. That meeting will be December 14th at 7 pm at the Jefferson county fair building in Valley Falls. We had to reschedule, from November 30th. I guess that was opening day of the rifle season or something.

Secondly, we are having a Basic Bee Keeping School. The interest in bee keeping is at an all-time high. We have Sharon Dobesh, KSU Entomology Department coming to present this program. It will be December 16 at 1:30 pm at the Northeast Kansas Heritage Complex in Holton, (new fairgrounds). We would love to have new and experienced beekeepers to add to the discussion.

Both of these programs are free to anyone interested. There is no need to register, RSVP or the like.

David G. Hallauer
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Fine Tuning Your Forage Nutrient Management System

When we talk about precision ag, we often think about yield monitors, variable rate application, and other uses of technology to ‘fine tune’ our crop production systems. Forage management systems, on the other hand, typically get less attention to detail paid to them. Precision forage management doesn’t have to include fancy technology or bells and whistles, however. In fact, the basis of the system is likely little more complex than a soil sample.

Why start with a soil sample? Because without it, one of the core foundations of your forage management system – soil fertility – is just a guess! How many other management decisions would you leave to a ‘guess’?!

Composite samples are a great start. If you take an appropriate number of samples to keep variability low, you can actually come up with excellent and accurate data. Monitoring soil test values over time adds yet another layer to composite sampling, allowing you to see how soil test levels are responding to your management over time. Just remember, there will likely be very high and very low levels in the field that get ‘averaged’ out by composite sampling.

If you want to make your approach a little more precision management minded, consider zone, or even grid sampling. Zone sampling is simply dividing fields in to what we call management zones, sampling them separately so we can determine where high and low fertility levels might be. With that data, you can start to determine whether differences are due to management efforts on your part, soil type differences, or some other reason. Whether you choose to apply nutrients according to those differences is yet another step in the process, but you at least have the information on which to start making decisions.

Grid sampling is most popular in very intensely managed cropping systems and may not be necessary (or economically viable) if yield from the field is fairly uniform. In cases where a composite sample shows low levels of nutrient availability, a grid or zone sampling protocol may further help define areas that are adequate in a given nutrient and which are very low and need to be addressed. Grid (and zone) sampling can help fine tune further what the composite sample is telling you.

What’s the right forage nutrient management program for you? Start with what you are doing today and ask yourself if that approach is adequately addressing field variability – and helping you apply nutrients where they can do the most good. If you think you can do more – and economics allows for it! – it might be time to ‘step up’ your forage management program to the next level of precision!

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark District Agent
Family Life

No column this week.

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Food & Nutrition, FNP

It's Cookie Time!!

The holidays bring the joy of time with family and friends. One tradition is making cookies to share. With recent recalls of contaminated flour, it is important to handle cookie dough safely to not spoil holiday fun.

Many cookies are shaped with your hands. Resist the temptation to lick your fingers or sample the cookie dough. Risks from eating raw eggs and now uncooked flour can increase your risk of getting a foodborne illness. Regardless of the brand or source of flour or eggs, the risk of foodborne illness is present when consumed raw.

Be sure hard surfaces to roll out cookie dough are clean and sanitized before and after dough has been in contact with the surface.

As always, wash your hands before and after handling cookie dough or any raw foods. Follow recipe instructions for baking cookies at proper temperatures and specified times.

Clean the Fridge for the Holidays

While November 15 was designed as "National Clean Your Fridge Day", this cleaning should happen often throughout the year.

Wipe up spills immediately, clean surfaces thoroughly with hot, soapy water; then rinse. Once a week, make it a habit to throw out perishable foods that should no longer be eaten. Storage times for cooked leftovers are 4 days; raw poultry and ground meats, 1 to 2 days. Avoid using solvent cleaning agents, abrasives, and all cleaners that may impart taste to food or ice cubes, or cause damage to the interior finish of your refrigerator.