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Livestock and Natural Resources

Cattle Temperament

I read a story about a Kansas veterinarian that died as a result from injuries from a bull attack. A couple of elderly brothers in Iowa, ages 84 and 79 were killed by a bull. Their third brother discovered them, as he was returning home from the hospital, from injuries he suffered by the same bull, five days earlier.

For the most part our industry, sends ill-tempered animals to slaughter. The problem is, sometimes the most docile animals can get agitated. More efforts are being made to select for calm animals including EPD's for docility. Researchers are finding ways to measure excitable behavior in a manner safe for the animal and handler. But not all problem animals display obvious signs before a bad incidence. That is why we need to be reminded, especially during calving season, don't take animals for granted. Even if we spend a lot of time with them, something could happen in our absence that can get them agitated.

Quite a few years ago, I had a close encounter with a male bovine. We were chasing a bull in from the neighbors pasture. My job was to stand in the gateway, so the bull could see where to turn in (a.k.a. target). He saw me alright, mistook me for a rodeo clown. I did a pretty fast sprint and leap. Unfortunately, the neighbor saw this and talked. At the next track meet I attended, it was suggested I enter the hurdles! He always enjoyed teasing me about that experience.

Nutritional status largely determines reproductive performance in cattle; so excitable temperament may indirectly impair reproduction in beef heifers and cows by decreasing nutritional balance. Also, the hormones produced during a stress response, particularly cortisol, directly disrupt the physiological mechanisms that regulate reproduction in beef females, such as ovulation, conception, and establishment of pregnancy. As an example, cows with calm temperament have reduced cortisol and greater blood concentrations of luteinizing hormone, the hormone required for puberty establishment and ovulation, compared to temperamental cows.

Accordingly, it was recently demonstrated that beef heifers with calm temperament reached puberty sooner than temperamental cohorts.

Further, beef cows with excitable temperament had decreased chances of becoming pregnant during the breeding season compared with their calmer cohorts. Similar relationships were detected when blood cortisol concentrations were evaluated against puberty or pregnancy instead of temperament in those heifers and cows

Therefore, excitable temperament has detrimental effects on the reproduction of beef females, which are likely mediated by elevated cortisol concentrations

David Hallauer, Agent
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Crop and Soils, Horticulture

Planting Trees? Start Them Off Right!

The right tree in the right spot is typically the focus of most tree planting programs. Finding what works for our intended purpose and then making sure we have it located appropriately is an important part of the planting's success, and cannot be ignored! What often does get overlooked however, are some of the finer details we need to pay heed to *after* planting!

We always think about watering. That's important! We might give some attention to wildlife damage if deer or rabbits are issues. That's also important. What about weed and grass control? Any cause for concern? Research says definitely!

Three K-State researchers at the John C. Pair Horticultural Center wanted to take a look at the effect of grass control (or lack thereof!) on newly planted trees. This study was designed to look at landscape trees, but the same effect can be had on windbreak plantings as well.

Their study included five treatments on pecan and redbud and three species of grasses: bare soil maintained with herbicides, area under tree mulched three inches deep, and grass (tall fescue, bermudagrass, or Kentucky bluegrass) allowed to grow under the tree. All trees were fertilized according to recommendations and watered as necessary during the growing season. Trees were monitored and information collected on diameter at six inches above ground, weight of aboveground portions of the tree, leaf area, and leaf weight.

The results were clear cut, showing no differences in any measure between the mulched and bare soil treatments for either tree species. When compared to treatments where the turf grasses were allowed to grow, all measures showed significant growth increases if lawn grasses were controlled around the tree. Tree diameter was compromised if any grass was allowed to grow with cool season grasses reducing diameters by almost half as compared to treatments where grass was controlled. Top growth weight, leaf area, and leaf weight were all significantly greater when grass was controlled as well.

The obvious conclusion: control grasses under a newly transplanted trees to get the best possible growth! If herbicides don't leave the look you want or you don't want to risk damage to trees, give strong consideration to mulch or even weed barrier fabric. However you do it, make sure grasses are controlled to a minimum of three feet from the trunk of the tree

Cindy Williams, Agent
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Food and Nutrition, FNP

Focus On Your Health For The New Year

Beginning the new year means weight loss resolutions for many people. Colorado State University estimated that 50 million Americans go on a diet each year. However, they also estimated that only 5 percent of Americans are able to keep the weight off after dieting. That disappointing fact, if you didn't know that already, gives us even more of a reason to ditch the diets and aim for a healthy lifestyle instead!

Just say "NO" to FAD diets. FAD diets are diets that want you to lose weight quickly, often reducing a large amount of your daily calories and restricting foods and even entire food groups, which leaves our bodies lacking nutrients we need, such as electrolytes, calcium, iron and magnesium. A couple of months ago, the American Heart Association presented a study that suggested that yo-yo dieting may increase the risk of coronary heart disease, as well as sudden cardiac death in post-menopausal women. The University of Colorado also showed that 35 percent of people who start dieting occasionally become addicted to dieting.

Ask yourself the following questions to spot a FAD diet: Does this diet completely eliminate foods? Does it promise quick, amazing results? Do you have to buy certain foods or products? Don't be fooled by FAD diets. They don't work in the long run! Focus on the positives instead.

It is important to focus on our health and make small changes that will last throughout the years. Instead of restricting foods and categorizing foods into 'good' or 'bad', focus on eating more healthful foods like fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Small shifts in your daily eating habits can improve your health over the long run, and small steps every day can make a difference in working towards a healthy eating patterns that works for you.

You can make some easy changes to cut back on the calories you eat by reducing the number of caloric beverages you drink (such as soda and juice); adding fruits and vegetables to your meals and snacks; switching out refined carbohydrates for whole grains, like whole grain bread and brown rice; choosing leaner meats; and being mindful of your portion sizes.

Here's to a healthier, happier new year by making some small changes to lead a healthier lifestyle in 2017.

Nancy Nelson, Agent
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Family Life

Reset Routines

The New Year is a great time to reset your cleaning routines and put some new organizational systems in place. Here are some cleaning resolutions to consider:

Make It a Family Project. Assign different family members specific areas that they're in charge of tidying every day. Dividing up the work and responsibility will make it much more manageable. If you have younger kids, consider setting up a sticker chart to reward them for doing their tidying job every day.

Update Your Storage Options. Does it seem like your leftover containers are constantly missing their lids? January is a great time to stock up on new food storage containers. It's much easier to stay organized when you have the supplies you need.

Refresh Your Cleaning Supplies. When was the last time you checked the expiration date on that dusty bottle of cleaner under your sink? How long have you been using that dingy duster? The New Year is a great time to get new cleaning supplies.

Wash Your Hands. There's nothing worse than getting sick right after the holidays, and many have been dealing with this. There's no way you'll stay organized if you're stuck in bed. According to the CDC, the single most important thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands. Critical handwashing times include:

- Before and after preparing or eating food
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage