

Jody Holthaus, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Livestock and Natural Resources

Cell Phones and Skittles

It was probably a good thing, that when I started my “big girl” job, there was still such a thing as long distance! Otherwise, I’m sure my mother would have gotten several calls a day, if not her then one of my older sisters. I have four older sisters, so that’s a lot of life lines.

But because we have mobile cell phones, now I’m getting a lot of calls from my baby son, as he navigates the real world of Southwest Kansas and parts of Oklahoma. He works and lives with coworkers five days a week. So there have been calls about the messy roommate, the roommate that is always up and night and sleeps in too late in the mornings. I’ve gotten the calls in the wee hours of the night to inform me of that latest earthquake in Oklahoma, that he has just felt. It’s a bit frustrating to be 5-8 hours away and not be able to do anything but offer my advice. That time it was “get outside”. There have been oncoming tornadoes, the lamb feedlot he discovered, the large dairies he had never seen before, or when they were grounded because the whole town ran out of gasoline, and the worst the town is surrounded by wildfire. This week, the calls have been heart breaking, he has seen a shed full of dead cattle because of the wildfires and many half burned cows, that needed to be put down. Nowhere in my “Parenting for Dummies” does it tell you how to prepare your child for these kind of adventures.

Interesting article, cattle and skittles, from Oklahoma State University.

News circulated early in 2017 about a truck hauling Skittles to a producer in Wisconsin, where it was to be mixed into feed for cattle. Social media was abuzz with the strange thought of cattle tasting the rainbow. Apparently, however, the novelty of this story is not so unique.

“For cattle, other than a taste difference, candy is not any different than including corn in the diet. They serve as an energy source for the cattle,” said Chris Richards, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension beef cattle nutrition specialist. “The bacteria in the rumen of the cattle break down the candy into the same materials it would the starch in the corn they are fed.”

It is not just candy, either.

“Cattle are well equipped to utilize feed and forage resources that are not suitable for human consumption or use,” said Dave Lalman, OSU Cooperative Extension beef cattle specialist. “Restaurant grease, grocery store unsold produce, outdated bread, water-damaged flour or cereal and on and on. And, of course...grass.”

With compartmentalized stomachs, cattle can utilize a wide range of forage quality. The first compartment, the rumen, is where much of the magic happens. Carbohydrates, sugar in particular, are rapidly fermented in the rumen. This process transforms the sugar into volatile fatty acids.

“These acids are then absorbed into the blood stream and used for energy by different tissues,” Lalman said. “Consequently, blood sugar does not vary dramatically in ruminants compared to humans. It is highly regulated in ruminants.”

While the stomachs of cattle are impressive, they can only do so much. A diet strictly comprised of candy, doughnuts or restaurant grease, for example, is not a good idea.

“Nutritional expertise is required to create a balanced nutritional program, especially when dealing with feeds other than grazed forage,” Lalman said. “The diet needs to be carefully balanced to keep everything working in concert and minimize any risk of mineral imbalances or digestive upset.”

Many of the forage materials carefully folded into cattle diets would otherwise be wasted.

“They are either landfill material or can be repurposed for other industries,” said Richards. “It’s a win-win-win; the candy company gets some revenue, the environment wins by avoiding landfills and the cattle get a great energy source that is tasty.”

David Hallauer, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Crop and Soils, Horticulture

Iris Leaf Spot Control Starts Now

Temperatures are up – time to get outside and get some stuff done! For those of you with iris, now is a great time to initiate iris leaf spot control measures. Check out the KSU Turf blog (<https://blogs.k-state.edu/turf/iris-leaf-spot-spring-cleaning-to-disrupt-fungal-life-cycle/>) for pictures if you're not sure what that is!

Since iris leaf spot is a fungal disease, infection is favored by wet periods during the spring with emerging leaves and even flower stalks eventually showing eighth to a quarter inch diameter spots. Borders are reddish, and surrounding tissue first appears water-soaked before yellowing. After flowering, spots enlarge and grow together. If weather is conducive, individual leaves can be killed. While the plant isn't killed outright, it can suffer from repeated infections that reduce plant vigor.

Spores pass from plant to plant by splashing water and since the disease overwinters in old leaves, removal and destruction of dead leaves will help with control. If the infection was light last year, that's probably all you'll need. Heavily infected plants will likely benefit from an application of a fungicide containing chlorothalonil or myclobutanil (multiple products available) when leaves appear in the spring. Repeat sprays every seven to 10 days for four to six sprays. Iris leaves are waxy, so be sure to include a spreader-sticker in your spray to ensure good coverage.

Annual Spring Reminder – Pine Wilt

Consider this your annual spring reminder: cut down pine trees infected with pine wilt!

This devastating pine has been eliminating pines in Kansas for at least two decades now. Unfortunately, the only control is tree removal to try and prevent the spread of the beetles that carry the damaging nematode. Beetles start emerging in late April or early May to head to new trees, making right now the prime time for control!

For those of us in Eastern Kansas, a dead pine tree likely has pine wilt. If it's dead – remove it from the landscape. Hopefully, that will help prevent the spread.

If your pine isn't dead, however, it might be time to take a look a little more closely at it! Other diseases also affect pine trees, and some of those can be treated if detected early. Contact your local Extension Office for information on pine diseases if you have any question about what your tree might be suffering from.

Cindy Williams, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Food and Nutrition, FNP

Food Tossed is Money Lost

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates about 90 billion pounds of edible food goes uneaten each year in homes and away-from home eating establishments. This is equal to 123 times the weight of the Empire State Building and costs consumers about \$370 per person each year.

Here is the breakdown from USDA on how much food is wasted from each food grouping per person yearly:

- *Grains: \$22
- *Fruits: \$45
- *Protein foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs and nuts): \$140
- *Vegetables: \$66
- *Dairy: \$60
- *Added fat and sugar: \$37

Got some leftovers languishing in your refrigerator? Or perhaps little bits of foods that are almost past prime time to eat. Read on if their next stop is likely to be in the trash can.

Give new life to still edible foods with the following gallery of ideas. As a general rule, use leftovers within 3-4 days.

Meat, Vegetables, Pasta—Search your fridge for foods that can be combined into a soup. Add extra cooked pasta or rice at the end, so it heats through but doesn't become mushy from overcooking. Keep some chicken stock or canned, diced tomatoes on-hand for a quick soup base.

Fruit, Yogurt—Chop and combine those last pieces of fruit. Flavored or plain yogurt—perhaps sweetened with a little honey and a splash of vanilla—makes a tasty dressing. Other possible add-ins include the remainder of that package of nuts and those final bits of dried fruit.

Cheese—Use up those odds and ends of harder cheeses by shredding them with a grater or in a food processor.

Eggs—A general guideline is to use eggs within 3-5 weeks after purchasing them for best quality. Gain extra storage time by boiling the eggs. Hard-cooked eggs, will keep in their shell for 7 days in a clean covered container in the fridge. They make a quick snack or sandwich filling. Check your refrigerator for other ingredients to include such as olives, pickles, pimientos, walnuts, red or green peppers, etc.; add low-fat mayonnaise to bind ingredients and use as a sandwich filling.

Bread—Transform slightly dried-out bread into croutons: Preheat oven to 350F. Lightly brush top side of bread with olive oil. If desired, sprinkle with Italian seasoning. Cut into ½ to ¾ inch cubes, leaving the crusts on. Spread in a single layer on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake on middle shelf of the oven for 5-10 minutes or until lightly browned and crisp. No need to turn croutons during baking.

Assorted produce—Toss assorted bits and pieces of produce lingering in the refrigerator and on your kitchen counter into a salad. Add the last of that bag of soon-to-be-limp lettuce; wedges cut from an almost overly ripe tomato and strips from the remaining half a pepper. Do something “grate” and grate in some cabbage and carrots; while you're at it, add some grated cheese. Mix in some leftover chicken chunks or add a can of tuna, and you'll have a bountiful main dish salad.

Nancy Nelson, Agent

Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Be the Key to a Safe Laundry Room and Routine

Single-load liquid laundry packets have become widely available over the past couple of years. Millions of consumers have found these packets to be an easy and convenient way to get their laundry done efficiently and effectively.

However, it's important to remember these powerful packets contain highly concentrated detergent and require the same discipline as common household cleaning products when it comes to safely using, handling and storing.

According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers in 2012, poison centers received reports of 6,229 unintended exposures to highly-concentrated packets of laundry detergent by children 5 and younger.

It is vital for parents and caregivers to keep single-load liquid laundry packet away from children to help prevent the risk of serious injury from ingestion or exposure to eyes.

Be the key to your family's laundry room safety to keep your home safe and clothes clean. Educate your family and friends about the safe use and storage of these new laundry products.