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Meadowlark Extension District
Livestock and Natural Resources

Dairy Farming Noble Tradition

Kansas is one of the fastest growing dairy regions in the U.S. in terms of milk production, due to a variety of factors like an ideal climate, land availability and a lot of cow feed, are all good factors for locating a dairy.

We are lucky to have some excellent dairies in Northeast Kansas, several of our dairies are being recognized by their peers, the Kansas Dairy Council and the Dairy Farmers Association as being the Dairy of the Year. I'm not sure when those announcements will be made, but I'm very proud of these two dairies and the efforts they make to be their best.

Even though we have top notch dairies, they all have challenges. Some of those challenges are the search for good employees, that will love and care for the animals like they were their own. We have plenty of feed for dairy cattle, but changes in the diet can have huge effects on the output. The weather changing drastically can have health implications and then there's the constant threat of those trying to put them out of business.

Recently it seems the Animal Rights movements have been at it again. Showing their pitiful videos that were illegally taken and praying on the sympathies of the naïve public. Spreading untruths about how unhealthy dairy products are for you.

I know how hard these people work, I know they spend countless hours making sure the animals are properly cared for. These dairy farmers are some of the most tech savvy people I know. The amount of information they have to keep up with every day is mind boggling. They are business executives in coveralls and muck boots.

They have all figured out that a happy cow, makes more milk and more milk feeds the world. If you prefer to use the milk substitutes that have less protein, more sodium and a lot more chemicals that is your decision, just don't spread untruths about the hardest working Ag industry we have.

At one time, milk was promoted as "the perfect food." Of course, no one food is sufficient in itself, but milk and other dairy products are very nutritious (they remain the chief source of calcium in the American diet) and can be part of a heart-healthy diet.

Don't believe claims by anti-milk groups that dairy harms bones. Though osteoporosis rates are lower in Asia, where dairy is rarely consumed, other factors other than diet affect bones, and most studies show that calcium from dairy is protective. Dairy is protein-rich, and very high protein intake slightly increases calcium excretion. But some protein is needed for strong bones, and dairy's high calcium may more than offset any small adverse effect of its high protein. Plus, in addition to calcium, milk provides vitamin D, magnesium, potassium and other key bone nutrients.

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

Soybean Fertility Considerations

Soybeans are a great fit for our eastern Kansas crop rotations for a number of reasons. One of those reasons is their ability to fix their own nitrogen, subsequently reducing that crop input cost for the soybean portion of the rotation. It might be tempting with tighter production budgets to consider cutting other crop nutrient inputs for soybeans as well. Do so only with extreme caution!

For example, while soybeans do tend to be able to obtain adequate amounts of phosphorous from the soil at lower soil P levels than say, corn or wheat, low soil test levels may well warrant phosphorous applications to make sure the crop has what it needs to produce adequate yields. As a general rule of thumb, soybeans remove around eight tenths of a pound of phosphorous in each bushel of grain yield. At low soil test levels, or in situations where we provide P to the corn portion of the rotation but not the soybeans, soil test levels could drop to a level where additional phosphorous applications are necessary to provide an adequate yield environment.

Low phosphorous levels have even been found to be a factor in soybean disease! A long term macronutrient fertility study at the Kansas River Valley Experiment Field with a corn/soybean rotation have showed that soil P levels can have a significant influence on the severity of SDS (Sudden Death Syndrome). During the soybean rotation phase of the study, SDS symptoms increased significantly as P fertility decreased. On a site where no P had been applied, the percent defoliation by SDS at R6 averaged 39% compared to 16% in a plot where a 60 pound P rate had been applied. The resulting yield increase was greater than 50%! The bottom line: paying attention to soil P levels is an important step in SDS management!

Response to potassium fertilizers is also high in soybean production, with deficiencies on the increase over the last decade or so. Removal rate of K in soybean production is generally around 1.4 pounds per bushel.

While micronutrients like sulfur and in some instances iron (typically in high pH soils) might be of concern, research hasn't shown consistent responses to other micro nutrients that would limit soybean yields at this time.

Soybeans are an important part of our crop rotation. While their fertility needs are not the same as those we are used to in corn production, they are important just the same. When soil test levels are low, nutrients need to be applied to each crop in the rotation for the best response. Make sure your soil sampling or tissue testing program addresses potential deficiencies to insure your soybean crop is as productive as it can be!

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

What is the Mediterranean Diet?

There's some confusion about what the Mediterranean Diet really is. It has been criticized for giving the public a seemingly free license to overindulge on endless amounts of olive oil, cheesy pastas and wine, which doesn't seem all that healthy. And it isn't.

According to the American Heart Association, a Mediterranean Diet consists of:

- *High consumption of fruits, vegetables, bread and other cereals, potatoes, beans, nuts and seeds
- *Olive oil is an important monounsaturated fat source
- *Dairy products, fish and poultry are consumed in low to moderate amounts, and little red meat is eaten
- *Eggs are consumed zero to four times a week
- *Wine is consumed in low to moderate amounts

The nutritional magic of the Mediterranean diet lies in its emphasis on consuming lots of plants: vegetable, fruits, whole grains and legumes. The cuisine contains very little saturated fat.

The Mediterranean Diet first become noticed after World War II when a study examined the diets and health of almost 13,000 middle-aged men in the US, Japan, Italy, Greece (including Crete), the Netherlands, Finland and Yugoslavia. Surprisingly, well-fed American men had higher rates of heart disease than those in countries whose diets had been restricted by the deprivations of the war. Residents of Crete enjoyed the best cardiovascular health, a difference scientists largely ascribed to their diet—based on fruits and vegetables, grains, legumes and fish. (Tufts Healthy & Nutrition Newsletter, September, 2013.)

Today, studies still show that eating the Mediterranean way can have a positive impact on reducing one's high blood pressure, risk for cancer and obesity along with other chronic diseases that tend to affect American eaters.

Nancy Nelson, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Lights Out! Mini Challenge

The eight week Walk Kansas program has begun in the Meadowlark District with 40 teams. This year there are weekly mini-challenges that are simple, although maybe not that easy to achieve. We all benefit from a good night's sleep and setting a consistent bedtime can help you sleep better.

This challenge invites you to establish a routine of going to bed at the same time each evening, give or take 30 minutes. Ideally, you also set a specific time to get up every morning and allow 7 to 9 hours of rest time.

Why is rest so important? Sleep deprivation has been proven to impair your performance, concentration, and memory. It can make you feel irritable and can lead you to overeat.

Establishing a consistent bedtime can be difficult, but it's worth it. When you get adequate sleep, your heart and mind can rejuvenate and you feel better!

This week, plan ahead so you can turn in at approximately the same time each evening. Is this something you could continue to do as a healthful lifestyle habit?