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Meadowlark Extension District
Livestock and Natural Resources
Fenceline

Nature of the Beast

By the time you read this, the Grazing school will be over. My presentation is on the behavior of grazing animals. I guess I have been fascinated with this, since I've heard some of the old wives' tales about cattle facing into a storm etc. etc. Plus, I didn't get to take Dr Owensby's class at KSU, so I'm self-taught!

Cattle's first choice of eating in the pasture is new growth or regrowth. We learned this lesson one year, when we only burned one side of a native pasture. The cattle camped out on the side that was burned. Their second choice will be mature green leaves, third pick is green stems and then mature dry leaves and then if forced, dry stems. Now we've all seen those pastures where they are forced to eat everything, even the grass under hedge trees and multi flora rose!

There is no scientific evidence to support that cattle have nutritional wisdom. They cannot determine whether or not they need a certain mineral or vitamin.

When forage is plentiful and good, they will spend less time grazing and more time resting. Of course when the grass is not good, they will have to graze longer. If you use a higher stocking rate, they will graze longer, competing for the best grass. If the grass is short they will graze longer, because they will not be able to sweep up the grass with their tongues.

Small herds in small pastures stay together. They will graze all together when grass is plentiful. When forage becomes scarce, they will graze individually.

It is optimum to have watering sources 400 to 600 yards away, if it's longer they will travel to water as a group. Which can hurt your gains as well.

Cattle will avoid areas that have their feces, sheep are not as particular. Urine is only a short term aversion for cattle.

Of course, when you see cattle in ponds early in the season, you can suspect horn flies. Later in the year, when temperatures rise, it could be a cooling off trick, especially in fescue pastures.

Cattle will bunch together in heavy fly infestations.

Of course, every herd has the boss cow. The pecking order is quickly established when placed in the pasture. Hopefully, your pastures will stand up in this dry stretch, and may your boss cow be a pet!

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

The Effects of Late Season Usage on Cool Season Grasses

You don't have to travel very far from east to west or north to south across northeast Kansas to find huge differences in soil moisture levels. It's easy to see the effects of moisture levels not only on our field crops, but on forage crops as well.

As we head in to mid-September, cool season grasses are responding to cooler temperatures with increased growth in preparation for winter dormancy. Photosynthesis via green plant leaves produces energy that is transported to roots to maintain the plant through the winter and initiate green up when conditions are right next spring. Our management now, therefore, has a lot to do with how plants will grow and produce *next* year!

For those in areas with adequate moisture, you might be looking out at a hay field that appears to have recovered well from summer harvest and think it might be a good time for some grazing! For those with little to no moisture this past summer, even a little regrowth might be better than what a drought stressed pasture is producing right now, making grazing pretty attractive as well. While I won't say that it can't be done successfully, doing so will take some careful management on the part of the grazier so that longer term damage doesn't occur.

Without adequate energy reserves in the root system going in to winter dormancy, plants can lose winter hardiness and can have the green up process slowed come spring time. So while it may appear that there is plenty of green growth out there right now, it doesn't take much removal to put the plant in to a deficit again. Grazing (or taking a second cutting of hay) this fall has to be done with extreme caution. At all times, the stand should have at least four to six inches of green growth – with even more preferred! Harvesting below a four-inch level means that the plant not only has to respond to the harvest of photosynthetic area, but depletes root reserves to do so. If adequate time and rest isn't given to replenish those root reserves, the stand can be compromised.

If in doubt, stay out! Fall grazing without adequate recovery time before our first killing frost can do long term damage to the cool season grass stand. There are certainly species differences to consider as well (fescue tends to be more tolerant to heavier grazing than does brome grass or native species during this time of the year), but all grasses need recovery time so that stand reductions are avoided. Before turning cows out, do a thorough walk through of the area to be grazed, using a ruler or other measuring device to determine the average grass height. If it's not tall enough, try to find an alternative! If regrowth has been good, grazing might be okay, but should be done with extreme caution to avoid removal of forage growth needed to help next year's stand.

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

September: National Whole Grains Month

Did you know that people who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases? Grains provide many nutrients vital for health and it is recommended that at least half of all the grains eaten be whole grains. September is whole grains month, and on average most Americans eat enough grains, but few are whole grains. Check out the following tips to help increase your intake of whole grains.

What are grains? Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product. Examples include bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ, and endosperm. Examples include whole-wheat flour, bulgur (cracked wheat), oatmeal, whole cornmeal and brown rice.

What are the health benefits? Consuming whole grains as part of a healthy diet may reduce the risk of heart disease, help with weight management and reduce constipation. Grains are important sources of many nutrients, including dietary fiber, several B vitamins and minerals.

Whole grains at meals. Use whole-grain breads for sandwiches, try brown rice stuffing in baked green peppers or tomatoes, or put whole-wheat macaroni in macaroni and cheese. Try rolled oats or a crushed, unsweetened whole-grain cereal as breading for baked chicken, fish or veal cutlets.

Whole grains as snacks. Snack on ready-to-eat, whole-grain cereals. Add whole-grain flour or oatmeal to baked treats. Try 100% whole-grain snack crackers. Popcorn, a whole grain, can be a healthy snack if made with little or no added salt and butter.

What to look for on food labels. Choose foods that list a whole grain (such as brown rice, oatmeal, bulgur, wild rice, whole-grain corn, whole oats, whole rye or whole wheat) first on the ingredient list. Multi-grain, stone-ground, seven-grain or bran are usually not whole-grain foods. Also, choose products with a higher percent daily value (%DV) for fiber.

To broaden your food horizons with whole grains, try substituting a whole grain produce for a refined one and using the Nutrition Facts Label to help you choose more whole grains at the grocery store.

Nancy Nelson, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

September is Prostate Health Awareness month.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men and the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths among American men. African-American men are more likely to get prostate cancer and twice as likely to die from the disease.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates screening tests and treatments for prostate cancer to ensure their safety and effectiveness.

Prostate cancer is frequently a very slow growing disease, often causing no symptoms until it is in an advanced stage. At that point, symptoms may include difficulty starting urination, weak or interrupted flow of urine, and frequent urination, especially at night.

However, these symptoms can have many other causes than prostate cancer, such as a benign enlarged prostate. If you have any concerns about any of these symptoms, you should contact your health care professional. Most men with prostate cancer die of other causes, and many never know that they have the disease. But once prostate cancer begins to grow quickly or spreads outside the prostate, it is dangerous. While the disease is rare before age 50, experts believe that most elderly men have traces of it.

One promising area of prostate cancer research is related to preventing overtreatment of patients with prostate cancer that is still localized to the prostate and who have a low risk of becoming symptomatic or dying from the condition. Careful selection of these men to ensure that they are low-risk is crucial. There is increasing evidence that close surveillance and repeated biopsies may safely allow these patients to delay definitive therapy (surgery or radiation). There is a need to reduce the burden to patients of overtreatment if the prostate cancer is slow growing.