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Conducting a Prescribed Burn – Planning Process

If spring fever has you thinking about a prescribed burn, the time to make sure you have a good plan in place is not the day of the burn. Start getting ready now.

To be fair, our ability to use a prescribed burn as part of our forage management is dictated to a large degree by the weather. Do we have enough wind to carry a fire, but not so much that it's dangerous? Has grass started greening up yet so that it's ready to burn? What about moisture levels? We have to pay attention to the impact of weather on our forages and burning window to make sure we are able to safely and effectively conduct a burn. So before everything breaks loose at once and our burning window is closing, now is a great time to be thinking about what equipment you'll need and preparing the site for a potential prescribed burn.

Start with pumps, hoses, and tanks on firefighting equipment to ensure they are in good working order. Is your pump properly sized for the flow needed for putting out a fire? Some ATV sprayers may not be. Do pump engines work correctly? Are hoses in good working order? A prescribed burn needs to occur in our very short window of opportunity. Safety should not be compromised, and a burn may need to be cancelled if equipment isn't ready.

What about permits, notification of neighbors, etc...? Many locations require notification of fire officials prior to conducting the burn.

Do you have proper clothing, equipment, and tools to safely spread and quickly put out fires? Do you have a back burn or tilled area or laid out other methods to prevent fire from spreading to places you don't want it to? A formal burn plan with efforts coordinated by a burn boss is key to making sure a burn achieves its desired objective in a manner safe to man, machine, and structure. Get started on that now so that when it's time to start, you're ready.

Need a burn plan? Our District Extension Offices also have numerous resource publications available to help. Your local NRCS Office or Wildlife Biologist can likely help as well. Contact us if you want to discuss a prescribed burn and whether it's right for you!

Iris Leaf Spot Control Starts Now

Want a quick gardening chore you can do now that has long-term benefits? If you've got iris, now is a great time to being control measures to combat iris leaf spot.

Start by removing old, deal leaves. Iris leaf spot is a fungal disease that attacks predominantly the leaves of the iris, getting its foothold in old plant debris. Cleaning that debris up now can reduce the inoculum present to be spread by wet weather later this spring. If infections in the past have been light, debris removal may be all it takes to keep disease levels low.

If plants were heavily infected last year, an application of fungicide may also be warranted. Watch for the appearance of leaves in early spring, then apply a fungicide labeled for iris leaf spot every seven to 10 days for four to six sprays. Be sure to include a spreader-sticker in your spray mixture to ensure good coverage to the waxy coating of iris leaves.