

David Hallauer - Crops and Soils Agent



ARC/PLC Resources

If notice of ARC/PLC enrollment has hit your mailbox/e-mail inbox, and you're mulling options while getting through harvest, don't forget some tools that might help. Available via K-State's AgManager website, you can find an updated ARC/PLC comparison spreadsheet plus documentation on marketing year average prices and even historical program performance information. Check it out at: <https://www.agmanager.info/ag-policy/farm-bill-0>.

Grassy Weed Invaders: What Do They Indicate

Grassy weed species continue to increase in many forage stands. From afar they may seem harmless. A closer look could reveal larger issues. While some weedy species can 'coexist' with our desirable species with few issues along with our desirable species, others are more of an issue. Here are a handful to pay attention to:

- **Broomsedge Bluestem:** an increaser in cool season grass stands for over 20 years now, Broomsedge has long been tied to low fertility. Phosphorous and pH levels are known culprits, but low Potassium levels can be added as well. While not known to be terribly competitive its perennial nature means once established, it doesn't give up.
- **Foxtails:** as annuals reproducing by seed, foxtails range from a slight nuisance to a much larger issue. They often emerge in summers with sufficient moisture when cool season grass growth slows. If sporadic, they come and go with only slight impacts on stands, but if allowed to repeatedly go to seed, they can prevent fall recovery of cool season grass.
- **Old World Bluestems:** of all the grass weed issues we've seen on the increase over the past 10 years, these might be the most concerning. Caucasian *and* yellow are two common ones in NEK and are both competitive with other native species and reproduce quickly.

While individual factors influence the establishment and persistence of many of these weedy species (fertility for broomsedge and ample summer moisture for foxtails, for example), the primary issue is open space. While almost impossible to eliminate completely, encouraging thick, healthy grass stands is the best management practice we can implement to keep them at bay. Vigorous stands tend to have less open space with greater competition to keep weedy species like these, and others (purpletop, witchgrass, etc...), from even getting a foothold.

If you've noted the increase of grassy invaders, now is a good time to evaluate how much pressure you have and start to make a management plan to keep them in check.

Land Lease Resources

Each spring, USDA's National Ag Statistics Service surveys operations about rental rates. Their numbers are summarized by K-State Extension Farm Economist Robin Reid into the *Kansas County Cash Rent Values* report which, along with many other resources, is available on our AgManager website: <https://www.agmanager.info/farm-management/land-rental-rates>.

Want numbers? The publication referenced above is a good one, as is the companion publication that typically follows it that takes an economic view of rental rates. They all have limitations but can serve as a good starting point for discussions.

Interested in a written contract or what state statutes say about oral lease arrangements. From simple to complex, resources on these topics are available as well.

Not sure where to begin? There are even references to help with that. Maybe they'll affirm what you've already considered. Maybe they'll help improve your current agreement. Either way, they can be great background resources.

Check them out at the link above or upon request via any of our District Offices.



Feet and Longevity

Foot and leg condition affects female longevity because a cow can only travel as far as her feet and legs will carry her. Poor leg structure may limit a cow's ability to travel pasture and select the diet she needs. Feet and leg structure is becoming a topic of reemphasis in female selection.

Claw set and foot angle are scored on a 1-to-9 scale (Figure 1), with 5 being ideal. Claw set describes the size and distance between the claws of each hoof. A low score indicates a wide claw set, which can create a functionally unsound animal, while a score of 9 indicates extreme overlapping and curling claws.

Hoof angle measures the angle from the base of the toe to the rear heel. A hoof with a score of 1 indicates a very straight pastern with a short toe. Higher scores indicate a longer toe and shallower heel, with dew claws closer to the ground. If hooves vary, score the worst hoof, as it is most likely to cause problems. Score cattle as yearlings and again as mature cows to monitor progression, ideally before hoof trimming.

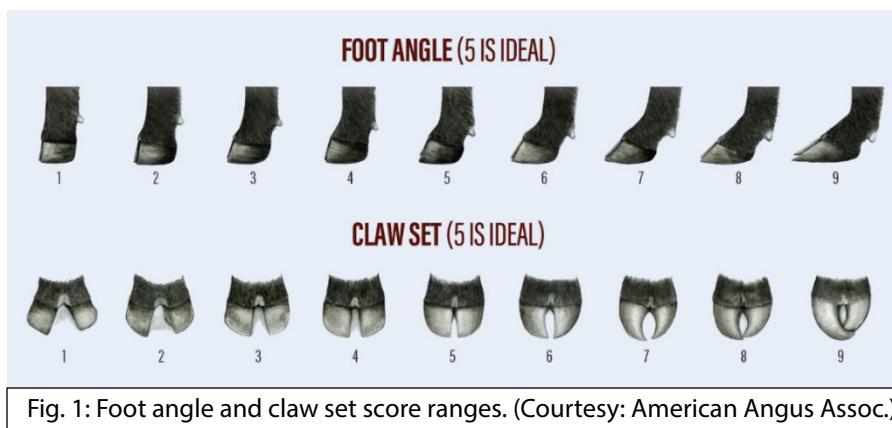


Fig. 1: Foot angle and claw set score ranges. (Courtesy: American Angus Assoc.)

Because hoof problems can be genetic, these scores can help identify animals that may need to be culled. Consistent foot and leg scoring provides useful data for management and selection decisions that can improve female longevity and overall herd performance.

Pregnant or Open

One of the biggest factors affecting cow longevity is the ability to have a calf every year. There are three primary methods to evaluate pregnancy in cows; rectal palpation, reproductive tract ultrasound, and blood testing. The following table illustrates the pros and cons of each method. Producers should consult with their veterinarian on which method fits the needs of the operation. Blood testing may provide a convenience factor in some situations but does not replace the value of having a veterinarian involved in the herd. If blood testing is the best option, the producer and their veterinarian should set aside time and resources to continue discussion on the operational needs and goals.

Comparison of Rectal Palpation, Ultrasound, and Blood Tests for Beef Cattle Pregnancy Diagnosis ¹			
	Rectal Palpation	Ultrasound	Blood Tests
Accuracy of Pregnancy Diagnosis	High	High	High
Accuracy of Assessment of Fetal Viability	Moderate	High	No
Determination of Fetal Age	Yes	Yes	No
Determination of Fetal Sex	No	Yes	No
Results available immediately	Yes	Yes	No
Level of training required to perform diagnosis method	High	High	Moderate
Provides opportunity to discuss with your vet other animal health issues on your operation	Yes	Yes	No
Establishes basis for veterinarian-client-patient relationship	Yes	Yes	No
¹ Adapted from Beef Cow Pregnancy Examination. Alabama Cooperative Extension System. March 2018			



Cover Crops

After your garden is done producing for the summer, you do not have to let the soil stay bare for the winter. Cover crops are grown for many benefits including to improve soil quality, reduce weeds and erosion and sometimes to promote the garden ecosystem by providing food sources for pollinators. They are typically not grown for their harvest as the primary benefit. The best cover crop for your garden depends on the purpose, planting time and planned method of terminating the crop.

Cover Crop Planting Seasons

Cover Crop	Planting Season
Legumes	
Crimson clover	Spring, fall
Field peas	Spring, summer
Hairy vetch	Fall
Southern pea	Spring, summer
Sunn hemp	Summer
Non-Legume/Broadleaves	
Buckwheat	Spring, summer
Tillage radish	Fall
Mustard	Spring, fall
Field turnip	Spring, fall
Grasses	
Annual ryegrass	Early spring, fall
Winter wheat	Fall
Millet	Summer
Oats	Spring
Winter rye	Fall

You can find cover crops that are summer annuals, winter annuals, or perennials. Winter annuals are best suited for vegetable gardeners who want something growing in the soil after their warm season crops are done for the year.

For a vegetable garden cover crop, there are several options you can choose from. Small grains such as wheat should be seeded from mid-September to late October at a rate of 3/4 to 1 pound of seed per 1,000 square feet. Spring oats can also be seeded until mid-September but the rate should be 2 to 4 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Spring oats will die back in the winter and can be tilled under in the spring. Daikon radishes are another good cover crop because the large taproot penetrates the hardpan. After the radishes die back in the winter, the loosened soil is better able to retain water.

Hairy vetch, alfalfa and sweet clover are legumes which means they fix nitrogen. Seed these cover crops at a rate of 1/4 to 1/2 pound of seed per 1,000 square feet of garden. Hairy vetch and alfalfa can be seeded from mid-August to late September while sweet clover should be seeded only until early-September. Visit the Kansas Garden Guide for more cover crop recommendations for home gardeners, and see our publication, Cover Crops for Vegetable Growers.

Fall Garden Checklist

Fall is a good time to prepare your garden for next year. A little extra care now can improve next season's productivity.

1. **Map your garden:** Record where annuals were planted to help with crop rotation and reduce disease problems.
2. **Test your soil:** A soil test can identify nutrient or pH needs. Fall is a good time to make pH adjustments.
3. **Divide perennials:** Divide spring-blooming perennials such as lilies, peonies and irises in September or early October, allowing roots time to establish before frost.
4. **Clear weeds:** Remove weeds, especially those that have gone to seed, to reduce problems next spring.
5. **Remove diseased debris:** Insects and diseases can overwinter in plant debris. Do not compost infected material; dispose of it in the trash or an appropriate burn pile.
6. **Manage leaves:** Mulch leaves into the lawn with a mower rather than allowing them to smother the grass. Mulched leaves add nutrients to the soil.
7. **Prepare for cover crops:** Remove plant debris and rake the soil before planting.
8. **Skip the cover crop?** Leaving healthy dead plant material in the garden can provide food and habitat for pollinators, birds and wildlife through winter and early spring.
9. **Mulch tender plants:** After plants become dormant in late October, apply 4–6 inches of mulch to tender perennials and those planted in late fall. Remove protective mulch in early spring. Avoid mulching too early, as it can delay dormancy and increase frost damage.

If you have questions about these steps or caring for your garden, contact our office for assistance.



Understanding Your Board's Financial Responsibilities

You do not have to be an accountant to be a good financial steward. Board members should pay attention, ask questions, follow the budget, and help ensure the organization's resources support its mission.

While the treasurer may prepare or present financial information, financial oversight is a responsibility shared by the entire board. Members should understand a few basic reports, ask reasonable questions, and pay attention to the organization's financial health.

Know Where the Money Comes From—and Where It Goes

Board members should understand the organization's major sources of income, such as donations, sponsorships, grants, dues, fundraising activities, or proceeds from community celebrations. They should also understand major expenses and whether spending generally follows the approved budget and supports the organization's mission.

Start With Three Basic Questions

1. How much money do we have?
2. Are income and expenses reasonably close to what we budgeted?
3. Are there significant financial concerns we need to address?

Learn to Read a Few Basic Reports

- **Income and Expense Report:** Shows money received and expenses paid during a specific period. Look for unexpected changes or trends.
- **Budget-to-Actual Report:** Compares the approved budget with what has actually happened. Large differences deserve an explanation.
- **Cash or Bank Balance:** Shows how much money is currently available. Remember that some funds may be restricted for a particular project or purpose.

Ask Questions—That Is Part of the Job

Board members sometimes hesitate to ask financial questions because they are afraid they should already know the answer. Asking questions is part of responsible board service.

- Why is this expense higher than expected?
- Do we have enough cash for upcoming expenses?
- Are bank statements reviewed and reconciled regularly?
- Are restricted donations or grant funds being used appropriately?

Protect the Organization

Good financial oversight also means having basic safeguards. Whenever possible, the same person should not collect money, deposit it, write checks, and reconcile the bank account without another person reviewing the process. Boards should approve budgets and document significant financial decisions in meeting minutes.

These safeguards are often called **internal controls**. Internal controls are simply procedures that help protect the organization's money, reduce mistakes, and make it easier to identify a problem early. For a small nonprofit, they do not need to be complicated.

Simple examples include having two people count event proceeds, requiring approval for larger purchases, keeping receipts with reimbursement requests, reviewing bank statements independently, and limiting who can sign checks or use debit and credit cards. The goal is not distrust—it is protecting both the organization and the volunteers who handle its money.

Financial Oversight Is a Team Responsibility

A strong treasurer is valuable, but the board should never place the organization's entire financial responsibility on one volunteer. Every board member should understand enough about the finances to recognize concerns, ask questions, and participate in important decisions.



Preparing for the new 4-H year

The new 4-H year officially kicked off on October 1. The start of the new year means it is time for a 4-Her to log in to their existing 4-H Online account and re-enroll before November 1. Re-enrollment is required for everyone, including youth members, volunteers, and Cloverbuds. The 4-Her then needs to remember that after they enroll, they have until May 1 to adjust their project enrollments.

Setting Goals

The start of a new year means it is time to set goals for what a 4-Her wants to accomplish during the 2026-2027 4-H year. Setting goals is important because it helps ensure that the 4-Her is moving in the right direction and gives purpose to what they are doing. While coming up with goals is important, writing them down is even more important. As Rulon Skinner states in a leadership book, "A goal must be written; otherwise, it is only a wish."

SMART Goals

When setting goals, make sure they are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.



A good format to follow when setting goals is :

- "By [date], I will [action] by [how I will do it], so that I can [reason or outcome]."

Below are some examples of SMART goals to help the 4-Her when setting their own goals:

- "By the end of the 4-H year, I will improve my public speaking skills by giving at least three project talks at club meetings and by competing at County Club Days, so that I can gain confidence in talking in front of people."
- "By July 15, I will practice making my foods recipe at least 5 times, so that I can be well prepared and produce my best possible product for the fair."

National 4-H Week

The start of the new year also brings National 4-H Week, a week dedicated to celebrating 4-H, its accomplishments, and the opportunities it provides for youth. This year, National 4-H Week is October 4-10. 4-Hers are asked to join us in celebrating by taking part in two nationwide theme days:

- **Monday, October 5: Go Green**
Show their 4-H spirit and help paint the nation green by wearing green clothing, decorating their space with green, or displaying green Christmas lights or other green lights around their home.
- **Thursday, October 8: Thankful Thursday**
Celebrate and thank the people who help make a difference in their 4-H experience. Send a shout-out or thank you message to their mentors, educators, and volunteers who are helping them become Beyond Ready.



Late Night Sweet Snacking

Do you enjoy a late-night sweet snack? You are not alone! In a survey of over 1,000 adults across the U.S., 38% said they choose late-night snacks because they are hungry, while 18% crave snacks. They state they get a sense of happiness or calm.

Of those aged 18-24, 58% enjoy their tasty snack in bed. The top three choices are cookies, ice cream and chips. Salty snacks are a popular choice. Many enjoy these snacks while watching a favorite football game, show or movie.

Men are more likely to snack late at night than women. While many types of snacks are available, sweet snacks remain at the top.

Change your snack choices to include more healthful choices such as popcorn, pretzels, nuts, fresh or dried fruits.

Think About Safe Treats for Halloween

Halloween will soon be here and be sure to check the treats before you eat. Look for torn wrappers, unusual appearance, discolored candy, or anything suspicious. When in doubt, throw it out!

When deciding what treats to buy to hand out to neighborhood goblins, keep in mind those who have food allergies. Always read the ingredients on treat wrappers and packaging to identify food allergens and identify other suspicious problems. Here is a list of non-food ideas from the Food Allergy Research and Education program.

- Glow sticks, bracelets, or necklaces
- Pencils, pens, crayons, or markers
- Bubbles
- Halloween erasers or pencil toppers
- Mini Slinkies
- Bouncy balls
- Finger puppets or novelty toys
- Coins
- Spider rings
- Vampire fangs
- Mini notepads
- Playing cards
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Stencils

Help trick-or-treaters identify your home as food allergy friendly by using a teal-colored bucket or pumpkin. Think about those that maybe can't have sugar or sweet treats and treat them to something they can enjoy.

Apple Wedges with Pumpkin Almond Butter

Serves 4

For the dip:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1/2 cup pumpkin puree (canned or from scratch) | 2 tablespoons maple syrup |
| 1/3 cup almond butter (or crunchy peanut butter) | 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon |

Apple Slices:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 24 golden delicious apple slices | 24 granny smith apple slices |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|

Preparation:

1. Mix together dip ingredients.
2. Serve with apple slices.

Nutritional content: Calories per serving-244; Total fat-13g; Cholesterol--0mg; Sodium-100mg; Total Carbohydrate-33mg; Sugars 24g and dietary fiber 7g.

Source: K-State Research and Extension, Kids a Cookin'



Teresa Hatfield - Family and Community Agent



It's Time to Review Your Medicare Options

Medicare Open Enrollment is October 15 through December 7. This is the time each year when people with Medicare can review their health and prescription drug coverage and make changes for the coming year.

Even if you are satisfied with your current plan, it's important to compare your options. Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug plans are offered by private insurance companies, and plan costs and benefits can change from year to year.

Why Review Your Coverage?

Plans may change:

- Monthly premiums
- Covered medications
- Deductibles
- Preferred pharmacies
- Copayments and coinsurance

Checking your options each year can ensure you keep the coverage needed while avoiding unnecessary costs.

Important Part D Changes for 2027

- The maximum out-of-pocket cost for Medicare Part D prescription drugs will increase to **\$2,400**.
- The Part D deductible will increase to **\$700**.

Watch for Your Annual Notice of Change (ANOC)

By the end of September, your Medicare health or prescription drug plan should send you an **Annual Notice of Change (ANOC)**. This document explains any changes to your plan's costs, coverage, and benefits for 2027.

Review the notice carefully. Even if you are happy with your plan, comparing options may help you save money.

Prepare Now with a Medicare.gov Account

Having a secure Medicare.gov account can make Open Enrollment easier.

A Medicare.gov account allows you to:

- View your Medicare information online
- Access your prescription drug history
- Compare plans more quickly and accurately

To create an account, visit **Medicare.gov** and select "**Create an Account.**" You will need your Medicare number and Part A effective date from your Medicare card.

Free Medicare Counseling Available

The Meadowlark Extension District offers **free, unbiased one-on-one Medicare counseling** through trained SHICK (Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas) counselors.

Appointments are available at:

- Holton
- Oskaloosa
- Seneca

To schedule a FREE appointment, call 785-364-4125.

Don't Miss the Deadline!

Open Enrollment ends **December 7**. Taking time now to review your Medicare options could help you save money and ensure your health care needs are covered in 2027.



Holton Office

114 W 5th St.

Holton, KS 66436

Address Service Requested

Some Programs That We Offer

- A Matter of Balance
- Dining with Diabetes
- Gray for a Day
- Master of Memory
- Stay Strong Stay Healthy
- Walk with Ease
- Bonding Through Board Games
- School Enrichment
- Butterflies
- Chick Embryology
- Glo-Germ Hand Washing
- Wheat Science

Taking Appointments for
Medicare Open Enrollment which is
October 15 through December 7.

Holton Office

114 W 5th St.

Holton, KS 66436-1778

785-364-4125

Oskaloosa Office

100 E Washington

Oskaloosa, KS 66066-0326

785-863-2212

Seneca Office

1615 Branch St.

Seneca, KS 66538-1504

785-336-2184

District Office Hours:

Open Monday-Friday

8:00 AM-Noon; 12:30-4:30 PM

Closed on designated holidays

<https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/KStateExtensionMeadowlarkDistrict>

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