STRESS LESS: Connect and Communicate Through the Holidays!

FAMILY DYNAMICS CAN BE DIFFICULT, PARTICULARLY DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON. JOIN US FOR A DEEP DIVE INTO COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH FAMILY MEMBERS TO REDUCE STRESS, CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT AND MAKE THE MOST OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

**PRESENTERS:**
- JoEllyn Argabright
  - REGIONAL FCS SPECIALIST, NORTHWEST
- Tristen Cope
  - FAMILY & CHILD DEVELOPMENT AGENT, CHISHOLM TRAIL DISTRICT

**Date** DEC. 8TH  **Time** 12:15PM-1PM  **Location** ZOOM

*Register* [HTTPS://BIT.LY/KSRELIVINGWELL](HTTPS://BIT.LY/KSRELIVINGWELL)

Contact us at livingwell@ksu.edu for questions or visit our website: [https://bit.ly/KSRELivingWellWebinars](https://bit.ly/KSRELivingWellWebinars)
SCN Testing Program

Soybean Cyst Nematode (SCN) doesn’t announce itself and warn you it’s robbing yield. Instead, small cyst egg masses hide easily on roots plants seldom show symptomology at all unless associated with Sudden Death Syndrome losses.

Yet SCN is a significant soybean pest. Estimates by KSU Plant Pathologists suggest losses across all Kansas soybeans at around two percent with up to 20 percent of the state’s soybean fields thought to be infested. A sampling of 30 fields across the Meadowlark Extension District in the past year showed 50 percent of sampled fields with SCN.

What’s that number mean? It shows how widely dispersed this pest is and reinforces the need for testing, both to identify the pest in problem fields as well as random monitoring of infestation levels across the area.

Some good news did come from the testing. Soybean cyst nematode egg levels found in the positive samples ranged from 10 to 460 eggs per cc of soil – all below the 1000 ppm threshold where we become concerned. So while SCN is present, levels in many cases are likely not resulting in heavy yield losses. It also means there’s still opportunity to try to combat this troublesome pest.

The only way to know SCN levels – and whether yield losses from the pest could be significant – is via a soil test. The K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab currently offers FREE SCN testing for Kansas producers on a limited basis. Funded by a grant from the SCN Coalition, testing is available to producers interested in seeing whether SCN may be an issue on their farm.

Immediately following harvest is a great time to test. Contact me for information on the sampling program. Sampling is simple, but specific protocols are recommended to attain accurate results.

While it may not seem like anything to worry about now, SCN is a silent yield robber, often undetected until levels are high and difficult to manage via practices like crop rotation or resistant varieties. Test now and give yourself one less thing to worry about next season.

SCN Resistance Declining

According to Iowa State University Plant Pathologist Dr. Greg Tylka, a single source of genetic resistance to SCN has been used in over 95 percent of available soybean varieties used in Iowa. The result: SCN populations in many Iowa fields have exhibited increased feeding and reproduction on soybean varieties with this resistance source (PI 88788), resulting in increased yield loss. To help reduce potential SCN level increases, consider other resistance sources, particularly if monitoring via soil testing shows levels increasing.

Upcoming Winter Meetings

- Carbon Credits 101 (Tuesday, December 14th, Knights of Columbus Hall, Nortonville; Time TBD): K-State Research & Extension Soil and Water Quality Specialist Dr. Peter Tomlinson will talk carbon programs and monitoring.
- Risk Management Skills for Kansas Women in Agriculture (Wednesdays from 5:30-8:30 p.m.: January 12, 19, 26, and February 4th – optional Cattle Risk Management session on February 23rd; Glacial Hills Business Resource Center, Sabetha); Sessions will include enterprise budgeting, crop insurance and marketing, and farm bill programs. $50 registration fee covers meals/program materials ($75 after December 31st); $15 for cattle marketing session.
- NW MO Crop Advisors Conference (January 18-19, St. Joseph, MO): Speakers include Extension Agronomists from Missouri, KSU, Nebraska, and other Midwestern states designed with the crop advisor in mind. Register at: https://extension.missouri.edu/events/2022-northwest-missouri-crop-advisors-conference/
- KSU Soybean School (Tuesday, January 25th, NEK Heritage Complex, Holton): Hear the most recent soybean research results from K-State Research & Extension specialists.
- KSU Corn School (February 3rd – virtual – or February 24th, Hiawatha, location TBD): Held in collaboration with Kansas Corn, hear the most recent news/research for corn producers.

See flyers/registration information at: https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/crops-soils/index.html

Live Christmas Tree Care

If one of your Christmas traditions is a live tree, you want it stay green and healthy looking as long as possible. You also want to keep it from becoming a fire hazard.

To do so, start by selecting a healthy tree. A tree is likely too far gone if the tree’s needles:
- Are a dull, grayish-green color
- Fail to ooze pitch when broken apart and squeezed
- Feel stiff and brittle
- Pull easily off tree

Avoid these trees if possible. Not only will the tree’s aesthetic qualities not be what you want, but they could easily become a fire hazard as well.

Once home, re-cut the trunk about one inch above the original cut to open up any clogged, water-conducting tissues. Immediately place the trunk in warm water.

Trees should be located in a relatively cool location, avoiding areas near fireplaces, wood-burning stoves and heat ducts. Make sure to keep the tree’s water reservoir filled.

Home remedies touted to keep trees green are typically ineffective. Aspirin, copper pennies, pop, sugar, or bleach have all been tried – with none proven to prolong the tree life.
Group Decisions

Every group makes decisions. The way a group makes decisions influences how people feel about the group. It can also determine how well the group members support the decision, as well as how they convey their support to others. Groups make decisions regarding their functions and purposes, plans and programs, community projects and political activities. The level of group agreement affects the feelings various group members have when decisions are being made.

To help groups make decisions, a process must be implemented and group members must work together to define the problem, identify issues, gather information, discuss alternative solutions and their consequences, decide on an action and follow thru and evaluate the results. Groups have several options to work their way through the decision-making process. Here is a summary of the most common decision-making processes:

- **Parliamentary Procedure**
  Most people belong to one or more organizations that use parliamentary procedure, thus they need at least a basic knowledge of the correct procedures. Parliamentary procedure’s purpose is to help a group transact business efficiently, protect the rights of the individual, and preserve a spirit of harmony. Parliamentary law is simple in principle. It is based on common sense and courtesy and the following simple principles must be observed:
  - Only one person speaks at a time.
  - Every member has equal rights.
  - Each item presented is entitled to discussion time.
  - The decisions of the majority are upheld, the rights of the minority to offer dissenting opinions and differing views are respected.

  Most groups get along very well with relatively informal procedures. However, the larger the group or the “hotter” the issue, the important a carefully planned procedure is. Meetings follow a standard order or agenda and all business is brought before the group using a motion making the process formal. There are five types of motions and the use of amendments to the motion can help clarify the decision-making process and a formal vote is held to make group decisions.

- **Consensus Decision-Making**
  A meeting conducted by consensus is less formal that one using parliamentary procedure. A problem or opportunity is brought up for discussion, without requiring a formal motion. The group discusses the suggestion, working toward clarifying the issues and the need for action. The group leader encourages input from all and then guides the group towards making a decision. A formal motion not made, but the leader states the consensus agreement and checks to make sure everyone is willing to support the decision.

  The consensus decision-making process allows for open communication among the group to discuss the problem and exchange concerns and solutions. The decisions are usually more informed due to greater creativity during the discussion. Faster implementation of the decision often occurs due to the amount of discussion and planning that takes place due to the cooperative group effort this process offers.

- **Negotiating Decisions**
  Dealing with both your interests and the other person’s or group’s interest is the basis for negotiating a satisfactory agreement. Important steps to follow when negotiating decisions is to separate the people from the problem. Many times people confuse the problem with the personal relationship. When people become angry on a personal level, it is very difficult to reach any kind of solution. You should always listen to understand when using this method and be sure to focus on being understood rather than just making your point. Always allow enough time to make difficult decisions and avoid making difficult decisions at just one meeting. Choices are often not satisfactory when they are made before enough information has been generated.

- **Summary**
  The decision-making process is a lengthy one that involves a series of steps. By following these steps members will feel the item in question has been clearly analyzed and they have had a part in reaching a decision.
Six Pillars of Character

Have you heard of the Six Pillars of Character? If not, here is an introduction to the pillars that we integrate into the 4-H youth development program. This isn’t something that is just for youth however! Adults, please feel free to use this information in your daily lives and in your communities as we all strive to be better citizens.

The Six Pillars of Character are the following: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. These six pillars are something that we each can use in our daily lives as well as teach others to do the same.

1. The first pillar is **trustworthiness.** It is represented by the color blue. An easy way to remember it is to think “true blue”. To be trustworthy means to be honest, don’t deceive, cheat or steal and to have the courage to do the right thing.

2. The second pillar is **respect.** How we think of respect is with the color yellow or gold which matches the Golden Rule. In order to show respect, we must use good manners, be tolerant of differences, be considerate of others feelings and to follow the Golden Rule of treating others how we would want to be treated.

3. The green pillar is **responsibility** and is the third pillar of character. It is given the green color to represent a garden or finances, as in to be responsible for those things. If you are responsible you always do your best, think before you act and consider the consequences of your actions and be accountable for your choices.

4. **Fairness** represents the fourth pillar of character. When you think of the color orange, you can think of dividing an orange into equal sections to share fairly with a friend. Play by the rules, be open minded, listen to others and don’t take advantage of others are all ways to show fairness.

5. The fifth pillar is represented by the color red. **Caring** can often be thought of as a heart. To be caring means that you are kind and compassionate to others, you express gratitude and forgive others.

6. **Citizenship** is the sixth and final pillar of character. This pillar is represented by purple, think of regal purple representing the state. For citizenship, you can do your share to make your school and community better, get involved in community affairs and obey laws and rules.

Being a person of character can be an important asset to the family, school or workplace. A family can incorporate these pillars into their family life as well as these can be placed in the classroom setting at school. For younger kids there are animals that also represent the six pillars of character. Above all, a person of character is some that others look up to and admire and is someone who follows the six pillars of character, and makes the world a better place.

**4-H Time Is Family Time**

You may have heard that 4-H time is family time. For the successful 4-H experience, IT IS! We all know that in the world we live in, people are busy. It just makes sense that 4-H is an organization that includes something for everyone in the family. Instead of being pulled in multiple different directions or parents dropping off youth at a club meeting to navigate it on their own, the family can all attend 4-H activities together.

When parents are looking at the options available for their children, being able to spend time together as a family should be an important consideration. Another consideration is that is that the program involves and empowers youth participants. When a young person joins 4-H, they are entering an environment where youth are empowered to make the experience their own. In 4-H, members take on different leadership roles to make activities happen. Behind every successful youth is the caring, supportive, trained adult. Often times this means that the parent gets the opportunity to learn something new, right alongside their child.

Part of the fun of 4-H is that youth have the power to choose the activities and projects that interest them. Members can choose and explore from over 30 educational projects, at their own pace and to their desired depth. Helping members learn through project experiences 4-H volunteers, both adult and teens. Some 4-H Clubs and specific projects have established volunteer experts in project areas. Other times, there may not be this skilled person, so the adult parent/guardian becomes the project leader!

4-H volunteers coach and mentor young people. They help 4-H youth feel connected to their club and community.

For information on how to become involved in 4-H, contact your local Meadowlark Extension District Office or visit our website at: [https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/4-h/new_to_4H.html](https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/4-h/new_to_4H.html)
Livestock, Natural Resources

David Hallauer, District Extension Agent

Local Calving Schools
KSU Calving Schools are set, with two local opportunities for producers to hear management tips as calving season approaches. Presentations by KSU Extension Beef Veterinarian A.J. Taroff are designed with the goal of increasing the number of live calves born when assistance is required, using a life sized cow and calf model to demonstrate the proper timing and use of calving equipment. Meetings will offer other timely topics such as forage sampling/analysis, and vaccine care and handling. Local meetings include:

- Wednesday, Dec. 15, 6 p.m., Fairgrounds Admin Building, Tonganoxie, Kansas; RSVP to Leavenworth Extension Office at 913-364-5700, klohmam@ksu.edu
- Tuesday, Jan. 11, evening, Fairview Community Center, Fairview, Kansas; RSVP to Brown County Extension Office, mayoung@ksu.edu

Forage Planning 2022
Armyworm pressure left many brome stands in less than perfect shape heading in to fall dormancy. While many stands did recover nicely, there is a good possibility for reduced hay production heading in to the 2022 growing season.

Cool season grasses recover after haying/grazing by utilizing root energy reserves to stimulate new growth. Many stands had been grazed/hayed and had just about expended root reserves during the recovery process to push out new growth – only to have that growth eliminated by armyworm feeding. In some cases, stands had enough energy reserves to recover nicely. Others exhibited ‘mixed’ recovery at best, with some areas greening back up and other spots remaining thin to completely gone.

For stands that recovered nicely or even partially, a soil sample is a good idea. Determine soil test levels now to give you the best information for developing a good fertility program that will give stands the best opportunity for recovery.

If stands are very thin or seemingly non-existent, start looking alternatives, knowing stands will likely still have some opportunity for recovery even early next spring. If you want to go back with brome, start pricing brome seed. The winter/spring planting window runs from now through early April. Fall seeding dates may be preferred, with the optimum timing being mid-April through mid-September. Seeding rate will be dependent upon soil conditions, but plan for around 15 pounds per acre of pure, live seed.

If you want to convert some of a lost stand to native, the seeding window stretches from March 1 to May 15, with April dates preferred. Mixes and seeding rates will vary, but should consist of a minimum of five to six pounds of pure, live seed per acre in the form of warm season grasses.

Winter cereals and summer annual forages may also be options to shore up any potential forage deficiencies. Both have potential for grazing, haying, or even silage production as needed. Two great forage resources to utilize when evaluating these types of supplemental forages are:

- Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool: https://mcce.msu.edu/selector-tool/
  This is a great option if you want to explore multiple options in a little greater detail.

The Small Grain Cereals and Summer Annual Forages publications are both available upon request from any of our District Offices as well.

Mesonet Animal Comfort Index
Cattle are most comfortable when they’re in what is known as the thermoneutral zone, a range of temperatures where they are not experiencing cold or heat stress. A cow in good body condition with adequate time to grow a winter hair coat can withstand fairly cold temperatures — not experiencing cold stress until the ‘real feel’ temperature reaches 18 degrees Fahrenheit. Below that, cold stresses begin to increase the cow’s energy requirement, resulting in a need to adjust feeding programs. Since we don’t often think in ‘real feel’ terms, however, it might be nice to have someone else do the math for us.

Enter the Kansas Mesonet Cattle Comfort Index. Available online at: https://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/animal/, the index uses climatological factors such as weather, humidity, solar radiation, wind speed and more to help producers determine animal stress levels at any given time. Developed with research conducted at the University of Nebraska and using climate information gathered from the state’s Mesonet reporting stations, the tool combines these factors and exhibits the results using a map to visually show areas of concern. Additional data for the week prior is available as well. For more information on the Cattle Comfort Index, see the link above.

Save the Date:
- KSU Dairy Days: Thursday, February 3, Nemaha County Community Building, Seneca
- 109th KSU Cattlemans’ Day: Friday, March 4th; Registration information coming soon.

Farmer’s Tax Guides
The 2021 Farmer’s Tax Guides are now available for pickup at all three District Extension Offices.
Focus on What’s Important When Building a Holiday Budget

This year, perhaps more than many previous years, may require a holiday spending plan. Among its many effects, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a hit on many family’s budgets. Because of that, Kansas State University family resource management specialist Elizabeth Kiss said planning for holiday celebrations should begin as soon as possible.

“It’s okay to set limits,” Kiss said. “There are many families that have experienced income loss this year and they may be wondering how they are going to celebrate the holidays. They may have to take a hard look at what really is important and what they might be able to let go. That’s fine.

“It’s an opportunity to really focus on what is important to them and their families. This year, the holidays may not be exactly like they have been in the past, but families can still get the essence of what’s important to them without spending as much money.”

Planning for the Holidays

Whether it be Halloween, Thanksgiving, the December holiday of choice or even New Year’s Eve, Kiss said enjoying celebrations means “getting real.” Determine what you would like to look like and then decide how you want to spend the money that you have to celebrate.

But making a spending plan for the last quarter of 2020 is especially important because of the impact that the first part of this year has had on nearly everyone. “Our own expectations play a big part in that,” Kiss said. “I think it’s important to get a handle on our expectations and figure out what makes sense for this year and then be happy with it. We all have had some feelings of loss in a lot of spheres this year and that may continue during this holiday season.

“But, I try to be an optimist, what is it that we might gain from many of these changes or adjustments.” It may even lead to some new traditions. For example, for Halloween, Kiss said one way to save money might be to contact neighbors and share costumes previously worn by children who have outgrown them.

“I also think about holidays like Thanksgiving, which is a food-heavy holiday,” Kiss said. “We should plan now to take advantage of sales, but even before that, try to eat out of your cupboards in late October and early November to clear out space and help you cut grocery spending in those weeks leading up to Thanksgiving.”

For Christmas and other gift-giving holidays, she suggests using up holiday cards left from past years, or asking kids to make their own wrapping paper—“it’s a great art project for kids,” Kiss said.

Whether shopping locally or online, Kiss said one way to save money is to start scouting prices for gifts you plan to buy. “The earlier you start, the more you are aware of prices,” she said. “Also, you don’t feel pressured to make purchases at the last minute. The longer you wait and the less time you have between when you order and when you need the gift, the more you’re likely to pay for shipping.

Check Out This Festive Fruit Bark—A Healthy, Frosty Snack

Ingredients:

- 1 (32 oz.) container vanilla Greek yogurt
- 2 cups frozen strawberries (no added sugar), sliced
- 2 cups frozen blackberries
- 4 Tablespoons strawberry jelly
- 4 Tablespoons blackberry jelly

Directions:

- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Line a 10 x 15 x 1-inch cookie sheet with parchment paper.
- Spread the yogurt on top of the paper. Place strawberries and blackberries on the yogurt.
- Drizzle with the strawberry and blackberry jellies. Tap on the counter slightly to help the fruit settle in the yogurt. Freeze for 4 hours. Take the bark out and cut or break into pieces.
- Store this treat in a zip-close bag in the freezer. Pull it out to enjoy a healthy, frosty snack.
You may want to let thaw 5-10 minutes before eating.

Note: Try new combinations of fruit and jelly (note: jam may be substituted for jelly).

Nutritional Information: Calories 87, Total Fat 0.1 g, Sodium 20mg, Total Carbohydrates 17g, Fiber 1.6g.

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, newsletter, Family, Fun, Run, Being Present, April, 2021
Bonding Thru Board Games

As families gather at holiday time you can build shared memories through a common, enjoyable experience like board games. While hard skills can be taught from books, schools, and training, it is much more difficult to teach someone soft skills. Those skills are learned through lived experience. Hard skills are usually related to the left brain, the logic center, while soft skills are more often associated with the right brain, the seat of the emotions. Board games offer perfect ground to develop soft skills in a practical, protected environment.

1. **Self-control:** Refers to ones’ ability to delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention, to manage emotions, and regulate behaviors.

   Getting a “bad roll of the dice” can seem unfair. Being okay with changes and rolling with the punches provides opportunities for practice on resiliency. Patience is needed to focus on the game, to pay attention to other players, to work through challenges, and to achieve long-term goals.

2. **Positive Self-concept:** self-confidence, self-worth, pride, motivation, resiliency. Tabletop games put players on equal footing at the beginning of the game and provide paths for players to gain additional abilities of their choice. Players must put forward effort, perseverance, and determination to reach the goal. Players are encouraged to keep trying until it is mastered. Failure teaches empathy and the ability to bounce back from adversity.

3. **Mental Health:** Board games help reduce isolation. They are designed to be played with a group of people or at least with another person. Board games help family or friends develop cohesiveness. Face-to-face interaction is a big component of playing board games and supports mental health. Board games are designed to be enjoyed by adults and children alike. Enjoyable activities create an emotional bond for the family or friends and foster better communication.

   Board games offer escapism, a chance to leave your daily worries behind for a while and do something different. Laughter is nature’s stressbuster, reducing heart rate and blood pressure in the short term and increasing your wellbeing in the long term.

4. **Social Skills:** to get along, respect others, context-appropriate behavior, and practice resolving conflict. Players learn social cues and practice empathy. Players learn to consider and understand that others’ feelings may be different from their own. In cooperative games, players work as a team and have to be willing to accept input and help from others, and together make decisions that advance the whole.

5. **Communication:** This impacts the depth of our relationships.

   Nonverbal: A big component of board games is communicating with your eyes and body. Sly smiles, shifting eye contact as well as hand gestures and body positioning can communicate purpose or keep players guessing.

   Verbal: Board games are a platform to create conversations. Players begin sharing their feelings when unsure what to do when an opponent blocks a move, or to be a good sport when losing or winning. Some games require players to make deals and alliances in order to move forward. Players have to communicate well in order to negotiate convincingly.

   Written: This type of communication is all over board games, whether it’s written instructions on the cards for the next clue, drawing crazy pictures to describe a word or sentence, recognizing numbers on the dice, or reading symbols.

   Active listening: Figuring out other people’s intentions or what is behind what they say, will give a player extra information needed to see the bigger picture.

6. **Higher-order Thinking:** This includes retaining the instructions, understanding the game, planning, concentration and visualization on the board, player’s moves and opponents’ moves.

What games do you enjoy? Board games are a great holiday tradition.
K-State Research and Extension is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision or hearing disability, or a dietary restriction please contact the Holton office at 785-364-4125, the Oskaloosa office at 785-863-2212, or the Seneca office at 785-336-2184.