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### Cow Poop

Not so long ago, I wrote about my youngest son. He was making me proud, when he noticed the difference in cattle poop in our lots! I think his question was, “why does the bull manure, look different than the cows?”. Of course, the pregnant cows were getting the very best hay and feed, and the bulls well, they were on vacation (you know they only work 60 days a year) and getting some poorer quality hay.

Now, I’m excited to hear about a cow poop analyzer is a free app. Some graduate student in Texas has come up with this! Blame it on Texas! Now you can pull your smart phone out and determine how nutritious your forage is.

The app is a series of photos taken to compare your cattle’s manure with the library of cow poop pictures. Then you will get the estimated crude protein and digestibility. The app is available for iPhones, iPads and Android phones. To get the app, go to your App store and search for Cow Poop Analyzer, where you can install it on your device. If you aren’t that tech savvy Texas A & M has a “Forage Quality Photo Guide”, I can supply you with. We’ve usually talked about reading cow manure at the Eastern Kansas Grazing school. Unfortunately, with some circumstances out of our control, we are postponing the school until spring or fall of 2019.

We will be having a tour about Native Grasses, mostly looking at Old World Bluestems and their nasty cousins, Broomsedge Bluestem and Tall dropseed grass. At this time, save the date for the evening of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Time and place to be determined later.

With our blessings of having native grasses, comes the responsibility to care for them to make them as productive as possible and prevent the invading species.

Old world bluestem is a plant that is becoming increasingly prevalent in native grasslands commonly used for cattle grazing, particularly in drier regions. The grass that was brought to the United States as a soil-stabilizing plant has come under fire due to how it affects the surrounding ecosystem. Because old world bluestem can become invasive and reduce the growth and vigor of other grasses that are more nutritious and palatable for livestock, the plant can negatively affect plant biodiversity, insects and wildlife.

“As temperatures warm up we will start to see more old world bluestem,” said Keith Harmony, range scientist at the Kansas State Agricultural Research Center – Hays, one of four units in the Western Kansas Agricultural Research Centers.

The plant is easily distinguishable, because its color is typically pale with a yellowish-green tint. The seed heads can be seen from a distance due to their pinkish or purplish tint. These grasses grow quicker than native grasses and also produce a seed head quicker, Harmony said.

Harmony noted that it is an extremely persistent plant that does well under dry and arid conditions. Old world bluestem has actually performed better than some native grasses under arid conditions.

David G. Hallauer  
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### **The Effects of Late Season Usage on Cool Season Grasses**

It would be an understatement to say that forage producers have had a tough summer. Cold April. Hot May. Moisture lacking. It has been the perfect storm for hampering pasture and hay production, as well as yields of the crops (forage sorghums, corn silage, etc...) we've tried to use to fill the gaps. Feeding has started way too soon.

As temperatures have moderated and with some areas receiving beneficial moisture, cool season grasses are responding (slowly) to a return of conditions that favor recovery. That recovery from summer heat and drought stress is being combined with plants also getting ready for winter dormancy during the next couple of months.

So what's going on out there? As temperatures drop in to the 70's, cool season grasses will, with adequate moisture, try to start growing again. When they do, photosynthesis via green plant leaves produces energy. That energy is first used to grow new leaves. When ample green leaf area has been produced, energy is transported to roots. Surplus root energy is stored to maintain the plant through the winter and initiate greenup when conditions are right next spring. It's a relatively simple, but often overlooked, process. When overlooked, it has a lot to do with how plants respond and prosper – or perish under certain conditions.

For those short on forage, a re-growing pasture or hay field might seem like some much needed relief from feeding. In many cases it can be. In others, long term damage could occur.

Any grazing this fall should be done with extreme caution (second cuttings of hay should likely be avoided...). As the stand is recovering this fall, maintain at least four to six inches of green growth. Harvesting below a four-inch height means that the plant not only has to respond to the harvest of photosynthetic area, but may have to deplete root reserves to do so. If adequate time and rest isn't given to replenish reserves, the stand can be compromised.

While there are species differences to consider, before utilizing forages this fall, try to 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. If stands must be used, make sure you are ready during the next grazing cycle for potential reductions in production or to monitor the stand for additional stresses that could further compromise forage yields.

Cindy S. Williams  
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### Reusable Water Bottles....Fill'em Up but Keep'em Clean

As the weather heats up, so does our need to stay hydrated. Experts suggest drinking at least eight 8-ounces glasses of water per day, and more if you're exercising. The reason is that liquids consumed are vital for keeping all bodily systems functioning properly including our brain which is 85% water. One of the least expensive, easiest and more environmentally responsible ways to get all that water is by using a refillable water bottle.

Reusable water bottles come in metal, glass, and safe plastic, not to mention a variety of shapes, sizes and designs. But the one thing all water bottles have in common is that you need to keep them clean. Bacteria can build up in water bottles if they are left full, especially if you are using them for beverages other than water, and can actually make you sick if the bottles are not kept clean. Here are some key points to good, clean (healthy) drinking!

\*Wash and disinfect your water bottle at least every few days, if not more often. It's simple—just add a few drops of dish soap to your water bottle, fill about half full with warm water, screw on the top and shake! Rinse the bottle thoroughly and leave open to air dry.

\*If your bottle is in need of deeper cleaning (think—to remove an odor?) after you wash with soap and water, use a vinegar soak of 1/5 white vinegar and 4/5 water. Let it sit in the bottle overnight, then rinse thoroughly with water in the morning.

\*Disposable plastic water bottles aren't designed to be used more than once. Continuously reusing and washing disposable water bottles may begin to break down the plastic exposing the user to harmful chemicals which can pose a health risk. So, use disposable plastic bottles as they are intended and remember to protect our environment by recycling them after use.

For more information about this topic and others, contact the Meadowlark Extension District offices at: Seneca Office— (785) 336-2184; Holton Office— (785) 364-4125; or Oskaloosa Office— (785) 863-2212. Meadowlark Extension District is on the Web at <http://www.meadowlark.ksu.edu>.

Nancy C. Nelson  
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Family Life

## Parent and Child Interaction Enhances Child's Verbal Development

When buying toys for children, choosing the flashiest toy with all of the bells and whistles might seem like the best option. But in fact, these high-tech toys could actually slow a baby's development of verbal skills.

The reason behind this could be traced to less verbal interaction between parents and children. In a study by Northern Arizona University, researchers found that although these noisy toys captured the child's attention, they didn't produce quality interactions between the parent and child.

When children play with a tablet or other noisy device, they often play alone, and these effects can be detrimental to their development, Bradford Wiles, a K-State Research and Extension early child development specialist, said. Children need meaningful interaction with adults to reach their full social potential.

"Research results are starting to indicate that when children isolate themselves through the use of these tablets, they are not able to regulate their emotions as well, and they're not able to get along as well with their peers," Wiles said.

"We're teaching children how to use a tablet, but the information that's on the tablet, the children aren't really retaining. So we think we're teaching them things like letters and numbers, but what we're really teaching them well is how to use a touch screen."

Research has shown that children who read books with their parents had far better dialogue skills than children who are constantly presented with noisy toys. "Learning to read is a necessarily engaged activity, so you have to have somebody mentoring you through that process," he explained.

Puzzles offer another great opportunity to interact with children. "You can give a 12-piece puzzle to a 2-year-old and help that child learn how it works," Wiles said. "It's going to be difficult at first, but it can help children and adults learn about each other."

He advises parents to consider that any activities involving positive interaction seem to help a child's verbal development the most. Therefore, it's the basic interaction between parents and children that allow children to blossom. Just because an expensive toy is marketed to make babies or toddlers "smarter" doesn't necessarily mean that it will.