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Livestock and Natural Resources

Tis the Season!

Most of the time I love this time of year! With the four snows and counting, the weather has been causing some unneeded stress. Add to that a flat tire, that needed to be changed on a cold blustery day and my holiday cheer is fading!

As the year 2018 quickly fades into the history books here are some things to think about:

Spring-calving herds for January Planning

A 1,200-lb. cow in good body condition requires a minimum of about 12.9 lb. of TDN and 1.9 lb. of protein per day during late gestation.

A 1,500-lb. cow requires approximately 15.3 lb. of TDN and 2.2 lb. of protein. The forage source should contain a minimum of 54% TDN and 8% protein during this period to meet requirements for maintenance prior to calving.

Prepare calving facilities and equipment. Purchase and organize calving supplies such as tags, navel dip, tattoo equipment and ink, calf scales, etc.

Feed during evening hours to encourage daytime calving.

Fall-calving herds

Remove bulls toward the end of January or early February to maintain a controlled breeding season of 60-70 days.

General Recommendations

Distribute hay feeding as much as possible to minimize perennial grass stand damage and to evenly distribute nutrients from manure and wasted hay.

Remove and discard plastic “net wrap” and twine from hay prior to feeding.

Test soil to determine phosphorus, potassium and lime needs for spring legumes, such as lespedeza, sweet clover, red clover and white clover.

Plan the financial management program for the year, including cash flow, deadlines for payment of interest and quarterly tax payments.

Ho Ho Ho!

Beef Issues Group will be meeting in Sabetha on December 17th at 7 pm. Dr Bob Weaber, KSU Beef Specialist will speak about Genomics for small commercial herds.

Call 785-364-4125 for details!

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Care of Christmas Plants

For a holiday held in winter, Christmas has traditionally been a time when we celebrate around a plant (Christmas tree) and give plants as gifts (poinsettia, etc...). Fortunately, many of these plants have value well after the celebration.

Poinsettias are one of the most traditional of Christmas plants. Fortunately, many can stay attractive for a long period with proper care. Doing so means placing them in a sunny window or the brightest area of the room (don't let them touch cold window panes and avoid drafty areas). Daytime temperatures should be 65 to 75 degrees F with nighttime temperatures in the 60 to 65 degrees F range. Higher temperatures will shorten bloom life. Lower ones may cause root rot.

Poinsettias do not like 'wet feet', but allowing them to wilt tends to result in leaf drop. Maintain proper moisture by daily examining the potting soil. Stick your finger about one-half inch deep into the soil. If it is dry, add lukewarm water until some water runs out of the drainage hole, then discard the drainage water.

Note: poinsettias are not poisonous! Their milky sap may cause an allergic reaction, but there has never been a recorded case of poisoning.

A less common but still popular plant given this time of year is the Christmas Cactus, a plant native to the jungles of South America. A little more complicated to care for, Christmas Cactus tend to prefer bright indirect light (or leaves may turn yellow) and common household temperatures. Keep soil moist but not waterlogged. Lightly fertilize every other week.

Keep cactus moist and fertilized even after the cease of blooming in late winter. Make sure to repot in the spring if plants are too crowded or flowering may decrease. Move plants outside in a shady spot for the summer and leave them there until frost threatens.

When fall rolls back around, cease fertilizing and give plants only enough water so stems do not shrivel in order to encourage flower bud formation. Cactus take special conditions to initiate flower buds. Make sure that plants get night times greater than 12 hours long and between 59 and 69 degrees to help generate flowers. If you can't get twenty-five consecutive long nights to accomplish this, place plants in an unused room or cover them with a dark cloth or cardboard box to insure that they receive uninterrupted darkness. After the flower buds have formed, it takes an additional nine to 10 weeks for flowers to complete development and bloom.

Last but not least, don't forget the Christmas tree. While they can certainly be put out to be picked up and maybe even turned in to mulch, they have other potential uses as well. Birds like them for escape cover and weather protection when propped up in the corner of a deck with some birdseed nearby. Fish appreciate having them sunk in a pond where they can provide cover for minnows and other forms of small aquatic life that can attract larger fish.

If you want to get real creative, cut off the branches and use them as decorative mulch around landscape plants or cut them up and make them in to garden stakes.

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent
FACS

Keep Hackers from Ruining Your Holidays

Kansans have or maybe busy taking to the Internet for a variety of cheerful holiday reasons. The increase in cyber traffic means, however, that home computer networks and smart devices will be more vulnerable to malicious scamming and hacking by persons' intent on dampening your holiday spirit.

“Cybersecurity is something everyone needs to practice,” said Ken Selzer, CPA, Kansas Commissioner of Insurance. “We need to be vigilant in making sure our personal information is kept secure, especially during the holidays. Kansas consumers should always be aware of activity on their financial accounts and insurance transactions and let their institutions know if something appears suspicious.”

Experts suggest the following guidelines for computer and smart devices consumers during the holiday season:

- *Set strong passwords and don't share with anyone.
- *When using unfamiliar websites, be sure the URL begins with “https.” “The “s” at the end indicates it is a secure site.
- *Keep your computer antivirus and anti-spyware up to date.
- *Limit the amount of personal information you post online, and use privacy setting to avoid sharing information widely.
- *Be cautious about what you receive or read online—if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- *Limit the type of business you conduct on public Wi-Fi networks.
- *Password-protect your smart phone.
- *Turn off your Bluetooth option on your smart phone when you are not using it.
- *Finally, and maybe most importantly, check your homeowners or identity theft insurance policies for the level of coverage you have in case of a cyberattack on your devices.

“Cyber vigilance begins at home,” Commissioner Selzer said, “especially during the holiday season when your focus could be elsewhere. Knowing some common-sense precautions can keep your holidays merrier.”

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Create a Healthy Holiday Workplace

During the holidays, it seems more sweets and homemade treats pop up in the break room, on countertops, and in coworkers' offices than during the rest of the year. It's enough to make you throw up your hands and say, "I'll wait until after the holidays to eat healthy again!"

Demands on your time and wallet may seem endless. People can feel overwhelmed and have a hard time remembering why this season is supposed to be special.

Consider suggesting ways to increase opportunities for healthy behaviors such as eating healthy foods and getting physical activity.

Offer healthy food and drink choices. If you have an office potluck or party, offer low-calorie, low-sugar options like fruit and sparkling water for everyone to enjoy. Small changes can make a difference.

Provide support to reduce and manage stress. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Workplace Health Resource Center suggests several ways to beat workplace stress.

Maintain or build relationships by reaching out to coworkers, family, and friends for support.

Drink in moderation, if you choose to drink alcohol.

Get enough sleep.

Manage time and tasks to avoid making too many commitments or feeling overwhelmed.

Keep on track with physical activity to feel better physically and mentally when faced with holiday season challenges.