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Livestock and Natural Resources

Wouldn't You Know It?

I took my laptop to a training at Great Bend, and it gave me great fits! So I called our IET department and tried some "over the phone" fixes. Because I couldn't hook up to the Internet, they requested it be taken to KSU to be worked on. No problem. They wouldn't let me out of the place, until I signed a waiver and we inspected the laptop together. You see, the IET department didn't want me to come back and say they had scratched it, or lost a key. Completely understandable! They emailed, the laptop was fixed and ready to be picked up, which I had arranged for my coworker to pick it up, while in Manhattan. That night on the 10 o'clock news I hear about a fire in the library at K-State. Northwest corner they say, 4th floor. "Oh good", I thought my laptop is on the first floor, northwest corner.

Needless to say, the laptop was a fire casualty, thank goodness for insurance!

It looks to be a smaller hay crop this year, planning now can be insurance for the future. One strategy is to adjust the number of head

to reduce and balance total forage required with available forage supply usually is the most economical alternative. Cull late calving cows, older cows, and less productive cows. Cull early to avoid selling when prices are low because everyone else is selling. Consider culling females that are in the bottom 15% to 20% of production for two to three years in succession. These females may be telling you that they don't "fit" for some reason. If there is a time when individual records are valuable in management decisions, this is one. Depopulation is the initial step in adjusting livestock inventory to forage availability.

Remove yearlings from pasture early and sell or drylot. One of the advantages of having a yearling enterprise along with a cow/calf enterprise is if pasture becomes limited, yearlings can be sold or moved to the feedlot and the calf making factory can be kept intact.

Usually in drought conditions, early weaning calves are more effective than creep feeding. Lactational pressure is not removed from the dam when calves are creep-fed. Data from the University of Illinois indicates early-weaned calves are efficient at converting feed to calf gain. If calves are early weaned, consider retaining them to take advantage of the efficient gain. Another reason to consider retaining early-weaned calves is they are light at weaning and, if sold right off the cow, usually don't generate enough dollars to cover annual cow costs. There is a body of data that indicates that early weaned calves exposed to high energy diets soon after weaning have a high propensity to grade USDA Choice or higher. Data collected at the University of Nebraska indicate that 250 to 350 pound calves will consume about 5 pounds of grass daily on a dry matter basis. There is also a saving in forage intake between a lactating and nonlactating female. Bred cows can get by on minimal forage if not suckling calves.

Use existing forage resources efficiently. It seems that the greatest benefit of cross-fencing pastures and having a rotational grazing system occurs when managing through drought conditions.

Grazing systems don't have to be extensive, but allowing pastures to have a rest period in drought condition aids grass persistence. In addition, if carrying capacity is lowered during drought, improved grazing management minimizes the impact of drought on grasses.

Consider some of the following grazing management techniques during drought.

- Construct temporary cross-fences within larger pastures to concentrate grazing. This encourages cattle to more completely use whatever forage available and defers grazing on the other pastures, allowing them to accumulate more growth before being grazed. Be sure to provide enough time for adequate plant recovery before grazing the pasture again.
- Skim or flash graze each pasture very briefly with a high concentration of livestock early in the grazing season to use plants that otherwise would become mature and left ungrazed if grazing is delayed. Typical examples include sedges, cheatgrass and downy brome, bluegrass, and early forbs.
- Temporary electric fencing and hauling water may be needed to control when and where cattle graze certain areas. Be especially cautious of poisonous plants as well as nitrates, prussic acid, and grass tetany. Some plants that are not normally consumed may poison livestock when forage supply is low.
- Avoid overgrazing rangeland, otherwise recovery following drought will be slow and production depressed for an extended time.

- Time grazing in pastures with questionable water supply or quality early in the grazing season when water demand by cattle will be less.

Additional forage supplies can be developed. These options, though, must be chosen with great care because they may be expensive relative to other alternatives, such as de-stocking or relocating cows. Following are some forage feeding opportunities. Cut winter wheat for hay instead of grain, especially if low grain yields are expected and price is low. Ammoniate your wheat straw. Oats could be planted as early as possible for grazing or for hay. Oats use spring moisture very efficiently to produce forage. Use alfalfa for pasture instead of hay. In this situation, other winter feed supplies will be needed. Protect cattle from bloat. Consider green-chopped alfalfa or hay meadows and feed daily instead of grazing or harvesting as hay. This minimizes losses and stretches feed supply to its maximum, but it can be expensive. Plant summer annual forage grasses like sudangrass and millets. These plants are drought resistant but will need some summer moisture for economical growth. Always test summer annuals for nitrates. If nitrates are high, mix with low nitrate feeds and adapt cows. Graze corn, especially dryland corn with depressed yields. Corn provides high carrying capacity and quality for a "salvage" operation, but cross-fence and introduce cattle slowly to avoid digestive problems.

If pasture is available and you want to extend the pasture, feed 4 to 6 pounds of alfalfa per head per day. Alfalfa could be fed three times a week to save on fuel and labor. Grain co-products are feeds to consider when trying to extend existing pasture. Grain co-products do not reduce digestibility of forages, so feeding them in a diet that is primarily forage will not have any negative associative effects.

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Tree Health Assessment

K-State Research & Extension Horticulture Specialist Dr. Ward Upham wrote an article this week entitled: How Healthy Is My Tree? Seems to me to be a pretty good question! Many would say we experienced some pretty cold weather this winter. Could that have done some damage? I would contend that it was pretty dry as well, and I'm certain that has resulted in some problems. What do we need to be looking for?

Start by taking a look at the new growth the tree is putting out. A healthy tree should have a minimum of four to six inches of new growth each year. If you take a look at branches not in the shade of the tree itself, and the majority of them don't show at least four inches of new growth, you could be looking at a tree under stress. When doing your evaluation, look for a color change in the stem. New growth is often greener than that from the previous year. You might note a compressed growth area where the transition occurs as well.

Then, look at the leaf attachments. Since leaves are only produced on current seasons' growth, new growth stops where leaves are no longer attached directly to the twig but to side branches. It can be tough to tell, so you'll have to look closely. Leaves may appear attached directly to last year's growth but are actually borne on short spurs.

If new growth is short and very few leaves are coming from the current season's growth, you might have something to be concerned about. Unfortunately, it doesn't tell you *what* to be concerned about. That will take a little more digging.

The vast majority of stress this year is a result of environmental type issues. Cold winter weather has actually resulted in weak bud junctions on the new growth in some trees, resulting in branch drop. Many of the issues we're seeing right now with thin canopies and suffering trees are a result of dry weather. Plus, while we did see plenty of cold weather, we had some warm stretches as well. Those are more detrimental to tree survival than we often give them credit for. It may take some careful observation to determine what the stressor is so it can be addressed.

Remember: stress is cumulative. That means that trees that suffered from drought stress in 2012, but have survived until today, may well suffer increasing stress in 2018 due to damaged root systems and loss of canopy. While they've made it through until now, enough stress could result in a 'collapse' of the tree. When temperatures stay high and moisture stays low, the tree can drop branches in response – or even collapse and die suddenly. We're typically surprised because it seemed to have recover. Cumulative stressors had other ideas.

The best thing for stressed trees is typically water. If possible, water to a depth of 12 inches every couple of weeks we do not receive rain in order to avoid further stress.

Cindy S. Williams
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FACS

Tips To Make The Most Out Of Your Farmers' Market Trip

Did you know that June is National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month? Celebrate by visiting your local farmers' market. Farm fresh produce is the perfect delicious addition to any summer meal. There are many farmers' markets in our district. Then, gear up for some awesome shopping with the following in mind:

1. Go early. The best produce is often found right when the market opens. Avoid choosing from picked over produce by arriving at your local market as early as possible.
2. Go often. Buy only as much as you will use within a few days, and store produce (except tomatoes) in the refrigerator or in a cool, dark place. Flavor and nutrients diminish quickly.
3. Plan ahead. If you don't plan to go straight home from the market, take a cooler so that fresh items won't spoil in a warm car.
4. Bring cash. Most vendors appreciate it if you have small bills for purchasing. And while some larger markets will accept credit cards, most will not accept personal checks.
5. Take your time. Scope out the entire market before making your selections. Prices and types of produce vary among the different vendors. You'll want to shop just as wisely here as anywhere else.
6. Try something new. While having access to the produce you enjoy regularly is important, so is sampling offerings that may be new to you. Educate yourself in the world of food by picking up something you've never tried before and then talking about the product with the local farmer selling it. You'll learn and taste something new.
7. Talk to the farmers. Make connections with the local farmers in your area. You might glean some unique cooking tips or even recipe ideas.
8. Bright is best. Look for blemish-free, brightly colored fruits and vegetables. Any bruised or damaged produce will spoil quickly.
9. Don't wash produce right away. Wash fresh produce just before cooking or serving—not before storing.
10. Recycle, reduce, reuse. You're already steward of the environment by shopping at your local farmers' market, so remember to take it one step further and bring your own canvas bags, baskets, or boxes to carry away your purchases for the day.

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Stress Management

Everyone experiences both good and bad stress. It can come from mental activity (for example, working on a research paper), emotional activity (having a milestone birthday), or physical activity (taking a walk).

The way you interpret stress is unique and personal. What may be relaxing to one person may be stressful to another. Good stress can be healthy and useful. It helps you get to an appointment on time or meet a deadline. When stress, becomes overwhelming, it becomes distress. Bad stress can lead to chronic stress, which can leave you feeling nervous, on-edge, and tense. It also puts you at greater risk for numerous health problems, including heart disease, sleep problems, digestive problems, depression, obesity and memory impairment.

No single method works for everyone or in every situation to manage stress, therefore, it is important to experiment with different stress-reduction strategies to lessen your feelings of stress. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control. A common strategy for dealing with a stressful situation is to avoid the stressor or alter the stressor.

Some things you just can't change. These are the things that you need to learn to accept instead of letting them bother you.

The need to be "right" often interferes with good communication and can cause stress when you are so focused on what the other person is doing. If you ask someone to change, you need to be willing to change yourself.

Let it go. Ask yourself, "Does it really matter? Will it matter in five years?" Sometimes you have to pick your battles.

Having realistic expectations of yourself, shifting your focus to looking at what is really important, and taking care of yourself emotionally and physically will also increase your confidence to deal with stressors. Sometimes, taking a deep breath, meditating, relaxing, or taking time to smell the roses allows you to appreciate the little things so you don't overreact to the big things.

Stress should not rule your life. Learning what causes stress and different ways you can cope with it is a healthy lifestyle behavior that will reduce pressure and anxiety and influence optimal aging.