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Livestock and Natural Resources

Polar Vortex Woes

As frigid temperatures found us, many were starting to have baby calves. At least we are somewhat prepared for colder weather, unlike our Texas neighbors.

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (the 2018 Farm Bill) authorized the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) to provide benefits to eligible livestock owners or contract growers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions, including eligible adverse weather, eligible disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law, including wolves and avian predators. In addition, LIP provides assistance to eligible livestock owners that must sell livestock at a reduced price because of an injury from an eligible loss condition. LIP is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA). The occurrence of an eligible loss condition in and by itself - does not determine eligibility for eligible livestock losses. The livestock owner or contract grower must provide evidence acceptable to FSA that the eligible cause of loss not only occurred but directly caused loss or death. LIP payments for owners are based on national payment rates that are 75 percent of the market value of the applicable livestock as determined by the USDA's Secretary of Agriculture. Rates for contract growers of poultry or swine will not exceed the rates for owners but are based on 75 percent of national average input costs for the applicable livestock. The 2018 Farm Bill amended certain provisions related to LIP effective in 2019. Those amendments included: • livestock death losses due to extreme cold are considered eligible losses without regard to vaccination protocol, or lack of vaccination; and • providing for compensation for livestock death losses due to diseases that are caused or transmitted by a vector and are not controlled by vaccination or an acceptable management practice. These diseases were previously covered under ELAP. Eligible Livestock Owners To be eligible for LIP: • A livestock owner must have legally owned the livestock on the day the livestock died and/or were injured by an eligible loss condition • An owner's livestock must have either: • died in excess of normal mortality as a direct result of an eligible loss condition, • or been injured as a direct result of an eligible loss condition and were sold at a reduced price. Eligible livestock must: • Have been maintained for commercial use as part of a farming operation on the day they died; and • Not have been produced or maintained for reasons other than commercial use as part of a farming operation. Excluded livestock includes wild free-roaming animals, pets or animals used for recreational purposes, such as hunting, roping or for show.

Owners or contract growers may apply to receive LIP benefits at local FSA offices. Owners or contract growers who suffer livestock losses due to an eligible cause of loss must submit a notice of loss and an application for payment to the local FSA office that serves the physical location county where the livestock losses occurred. All of the owner's or contract grower's interest in inventory of eligible livestock in that county for the calendar year must be accounted for and summarized when determining eligibility. An owner or contract grower must file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is first apparent as well as file an application for payment within 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. For 2021 LIP losses, livestock owners and contract growers may apply for 2021 LIP benefits in the physical location county where the loss occurred.

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

Conducting a Prescribed Burn – Planning Process

If spring fever has you thinking about a prescribed burn, the time to make sure you have a good plan in place is not the day of the burn. Start getting ready now.

To be fair, our ability to use a prescribed burn as part of our forage management is dictated to a large degree by the weather. Do we have enough wind to carry a fire, but not so much that it's dangerous? Has grass started greening up yet so that it's ready to burn? What about moisture levels? We have to pay attention to the impact of weather on our forages and burning window to make sure we are able to safely and effectively conduct a burn. So before everything breaks loose at once and our burning window is closing, now is a great time to be thinking about what equipment you'll need and preparing the site for a potential prescribed burn.

Start with pumps, hoses, and tanks on firefighting equipment to ensure they are in good working order. Is your pump properly sized for the flow needed for putting out a fire? Some ATV sprayers may not be. Do pump engines work correctly? Are hoses in good working order? A prescribed burn needs to occur in our very short window of opportunity. Safety should not be compromised, and a burn may need to be cancelled if equipment isn't ready.

What about permits, notification of neighbors, etc...? Many locations require notification of fire officials prior to conducting the burn.

Do you have proper clothing, equipment, and tools to safely spread and quickly put out fires? Do you have a back burn or tilled area or laid out other methods to prevent fire from spreading to places you don't want it to? A formal burn plan with efforts coordinated by a burn boss is key to making sure a burn achieves its desired objective in a manner safe to man, machine, and structure. Get started on that now so that when it's time to start, you're ready.

Need a burn plan? Our District Extension Offices also have numerous resource publications available to help. Your local NRCS Office or Wildlife Biologist can likely help as well. Contact us if you want to discuss a prescribed burn and whether it's right for you!

Iris Leaf Spot Control Starts Now

Want a quick gardening chore you can do now that has long-term benefits? If you've got iris, now is a great time to being control measures to combat iris leaf spot.

Start by removing old, deal leaves. Iris leaf spot is a fungal disease that attacks predominantly the leaves of the iris, getting its foothold in old plant debris. Cleaning that debris up now can reduce the inoculum present to be spread by wet weather later this spring. If infections in the past have been light, debris removal may be all it takes to keep disease levels low.

If plants were heavily infected last year, an application of fungicide may also be warranted. Watch for the appearance of leaves in early spring, then apply a fungicide labeled for iris leaf spot every seven to 10 days for four to six sprays. Be sure to include a spreader-sticker in your spray mixture to ensure good coverage to the waxy coating of iris leaves.

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Cabin Fever Symptoms and Coping Skills

Cabin fever is a popular term for a relatively common reaction to being isolated or confined for an extended period of time. Cabin fever is not a specific diagnosis but rather a constellations of symptoms that can occur under these circumstances.

If you are experiencing cabin fever as a result of social distancing or self-quarantine in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, you may be feeling additional stress beyond that which stems from simply being isolated. There are ways to combat the anxiety you may be feeling.

Symptoms: Not everyone suffering from cabin fever will experience exactly the same symptoms, but many people report feeling intensely irritable or restless. Other commonly experienced effects are decreased motivation, difficulty walking, food cravings, frequent napping, hopelessness, lack of patience, lethargy, sadness or depression, and trouble concentrating. Note that these symptoms may also be indicative of a wide range of other disorders. If these symptoms are distressing or impact your functioning, a trained mental health professional could help you determine if you have a treatable disorder.

Coping: If your symptoms are relatively mild, taking active steps to combat your feelings may be enough to help you feel better. If they are impacting you more frequently, they are best addressed with the assistance of a therapist or other mental health professional.

Get out of the house: If you are able to go outside, even for a short time, take advantage of that opportunity. Exposure to daylight can help regulate the body's natural cycles, and exercise releases endorphins, creating a natural high. Even a quick stroll can help you feel better quickly. If you are not able to leave the house at all, get close to a window and start moving around.

Maintain normal eating patterns: For many of us, a day stuck at home is an excuse to overindulge in junk food. Others skip meals altogether. However, eating right can increase your energy levels and motivation. You may feel less hungry if you are getting less exercise, but monitor you're eating habits to ensure that you maintain the proper balance of nutrition. Limit high-sugar, high-fat snacks and drink plenty of water.

Set goals: When you are stuck in the house, you may be more likely to whittle away the time doing nothing of importance. Set daily and weekly goals and track your progress toward completion. Make sure that your goals are reasonable, and reward yourself for meeting each milestone.

Use your brain: Although TV is a distraction, it is also relatively mindless. Work crossword puzzles, read books, read books or play board games. Stimulating your mind can help keep you moving forward and reduce feelings of isolation and helplessness.

Exercise: Even if you cannot leave the house, find a way to stay physically active while indoors. Regular physical activity can help burn off any extra energy you have from being cooped up indoors. Indoor exercise ideas include workout videos, bodyweight workouts, and online workout routines.

While staying indoors and social distancing may run counter to our instinct for socialization, it is imperative that we heed the strict guidelines given by the CDC to help minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Ignoring these recommendations will result in an increase in the number of symptomatic cases and deaths.

It is important to take this situation seriously and face the necessity of being stuck indoors with "cabin fever." Read a book, play board games, watch television, and talk to friends via Face Time---but stay inside.

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Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark District
Family Life

No news from Nancy this week.