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Jody G. Holthaus  
District Extension Agent  
Livestock and Natural Resources

### **Sheep and Goats**

Sheep and goat numbers are on the uptick across Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma as the result of a growing interest in raising the ruminants for show, hobby, and retiree purposes. Sheep and goats can be raised on smaller acreages, but they do have their challenges, such as fencing, predators, and parasites. Some of those and other topics will be discussed at our Sheep & Goat workshop.

The school will be offered on April 7, 2021, at the NE Kansas Heritage Complex, 12000 214<sup>th</sup> Road in Holton, Kansas. Dr. Alison Crane, KSU Sheep & Meat Goat Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor will be presenting “Costs of Production” and “Spring Parasite Control.”

Due to Covid Restrictions, we ask that you social distance and wear a mask. The school will be recorded and posted for future viewing.

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

### ***Cold Snaps and Insect Life***

Now that nice weather has returned – for now... - it's easier to take a look back and see if anything beneficial resulted from the recent cold snap. One of the 'hopes' crop producers or gardeners often have is the potential (detrimental) effect of the cold snap on insect life.

Insects handle cold in a number of ways. Some (wireworms and Japanese Beetle, for example) overwinter in the soil. That soil provides them a good buffer against the coldest of temperatures. Data from the Kansas Mesonet (<https://mesonet.k-state.edu/>) stations in the District (Corning/Oskaloosa) show that on even the coldest days of February, two-inch soil temperatures dipped only in to the high 20's. Temperatures typically have to get much colder than that to cause any issues.

Bean leaf beetles and squash bugs winter above ground and would be more exposed to potential cold injury, but even they do quite well at adapting and tend to find ways to protect themselves as cold weather approaches. Natural body mechanisms (there are multiple) also help, but even many freeze susceptible insects aren't going to experience much mortality until temperatures drop to four degrees below zero – and often lower.

Bottom line: the cold snap we just experience likely didn't do much damage to most insect species. They were likely well protected and will live to fight another day. Even if they did not, it is unlikely that the cold caused a great enough level of mortality to rid us of them all, meaning there will be plenty of them to survive and reproduce through the summer.

What often results in greater mortality is cold snaps *after* insects have come out of a more dormant state later on in the spring. It *is* possible at that point to get some mortality from freezing temperatures (temperatures in the 20's for long periods or even in to the teens after alfalfa weevil larvae have become active for example), but even then, greatly reduced levels are not likely. In other words, keep scouting – the insects haven't gone away.

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

### **Spring Cleaning: Items You Should Clean More Often Than You Do**

With the “spring” weather we have been experiencing, spring cleaning maybe something you are getting ready to do. No matter how often or how vigorously you clean, you can still have myriad of household germs lurking around your home. Unbeknownst to you, invisible microbes like viruses and bacteria might be making you sick.

For example, flu-causing viruses can remain active for as long as two days; in some cases, specific viruses may spread infections for an extended timeframe, for months. These pesky germs tend to stay active longer on hard surfaces like stainless steel and plastic than on softer surfaces like fabric.

*Infection and Immunity* shows bacterial infections like *Streptococcus pyogenes* (strep throat) and *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (pneumonia) could remain active for “extended periods of time.” Resulting in one possible way infections are transmitted from person-to-person.

Where are all those little buggers hanging out? Here, we look at places you don’t realize household germs are hiding. But before you get thoroughly creeped out, we’ll tell you what you can do to make your home less hospitable to them.

\*Kitchen sponge—Yes, the little sponge you use to clean your dishes and countertops harbors all sorts of critters---over 350 different species of bacteria.

According to a 2017 study in *Nature Scientific Report*, researchers analyzed the microbial makeup of 28 used kitchen sponges and found species of disease-causing bacterial like *Acinetobacter*, *Moraxella*, and *Chryseobacterium*, among other pathogens.

How to clean your sponges? Do you need to stop using sponges altogether? Not necessarily, Michigan State University offers the following tips to sanitize your sponge. Avoid using your sponge to clean up meat products. Instead using paper towels and immediately tossing them in the trash.

Also, you can clean your sponge by soaking it in a combination of water and bleach for one minute, running it through the dishwasher on the hottest and longest setting, and microwaving it on high for one minute. Finally, swap out our used sponge for a clean one.

\*Door handles and knobs. Cleaning these areas is a simple fix—grab a disinfectant wipe and run it over the small area you and your family come in contact with the most. When you think about cleaning, it’s easy to overlook the tiny details in your home like door handles, knobs, and deadbolts. On any given day, your hands frequently touch these spots, and that presents another opportunity to spread viruses and bacteria around your environment.

\*Pet bowls and toys. Unfortunately, your beloved, four-legged friend isn’t exempt from passing around germs that could potentially make you sick. In 2011, the *National Sanitation Foundation* (NSE) ranked pet bowls as number four and pet toys as number seven on the list of the most germ-filled places in your home. Pet products can harbor bacteria like *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and more.

How to clean pet products? To clean your pet’s food and water bowls, wash them with warm soap and water each day and disinfect the bowls on a weekly basis by putting them in the dishwasher.

Additionally, since your pet is licking, chewing, and dragging toys round the house, it’s a good idea to throw these items in the wash every couple of weeks and use a non-toxic disinfectant to wipe down any toys that aren’t washable.

\*The vinyl shower curtain. Researchers from the University of Colorado at Boulder found that soap scum that accumulates on your shower curtain may be more than just an unattractive sight. In fact, vinyl

shower curtains are a haven for disease-causing microbes like *Sphingomonas* and *Methylobacterium*, which can be dangerous for immunocompromised individuals.

How to clean your shower curtain? To properly clean your shower curtain, try washing it in your washing machine on a gentle setting. If that doesn't remove the unwanted soapy buildup, it might be time to buy a new shower curtain.

\*Your toothbrush. One British study showed more than 10 million bacteria reside on your toothbrush--that's a higher number of microbes than what's on a toilet seat!

Experts say your toothbrush is exposed to a tainted, aerosolized mist of water every time you flush the toilet, and droplets have been known to land as far away from the toilet as 10 feet. Inadvertently, you're likely brushing your teeth with fecal matter and other pathogens.

But before you stop permanently brushing your teeth, know that most of these germs aren't harmful to you, and the benefits of brushing your teeth outweigh the risks.

How to keep your toothbrush clean? To decrease the prospect of developing bacteria on your toothbrush, close the lid on your toilet when you flush it. Also, rinse your toothbrush and let it air dry; placing it in a container while wet creates a welcoming environment for pathogens.

Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark District  
Family Life

Ready to get moving? Walk Kansas starts March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Walk Kansas is an energizing 8-week, team-based health initiative. Groups of six form a team, with one serving as the captain. Teams can be family, coworkers, friends, community organization members or neighbors.

This year a solo trail will be offered for those walkers who wish to set out on their own path along with the team challenges that have been offered in the past.

During Walk Kansas participants log and report minutes of physical activity and can also log cups of fruits and vegetables consumed and glasses of water. Tracking can be a useful tool for making lifestyle changes. Recording progress keeps you focused and helps you meet and exceed goals.

Each weekly newsletter will focus on ways to prevent, delay, and manage chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, cancers, and osteoporosis.

More details including online registration at [www.walkkansas.org](http://www.walkkansas.org). You can contact your local Extension office for more information or help with registration.

Join us for the joy of movement and share the experience with friends and family!