

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

## Cover Crop Evaluations

If you regularly plant cover crops, you probably already have a ‘mix’ you like to use based on the purpose for planting a cover crop in the first place. If you’re new to cover crops, the options can be overwhelming. While there are lots of local resources available to assist you, if you want to do some exploration and forward planning, on your own, consider a couple of lesser known resources available to producers as well.

The first is the Midwest Cover Crops Council Decision Tool available online at: <https://midwestcovercrops.org/covercroptool/>. It allows you to input a location, reason for planting a cover crop (multiple ones if needed) and the cash crops you are managing around. With this information, it assembles a list of possible crops as suggested by a collaborative group of University Extension Specialists, NRCS Technical Service Personnel, and Seed Industry Experts. It no doubt misses a few crops, but it will give you a great first step about what crops to consider, plus provides planting/management information on individual crops as well.

Once you get a crop (or three...) selected, you may be curious about varieties. A 2020 publication summarized a two-year evaluation of 56 commercially available varieties of eight different cover crops, including black oats, cereal rye, crimson clover, and daikon radish. Similar to variety trials for our commodity crops, this study aims to help you choose the best adapted cover crop for your system. It can be accessed at [https://www.midwestcovercrops.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NRCS\\_2020\\_Evaluation-fo-Cool-Season-Cover-Crops-in-NCR.pdf](https://www.midwestcovercrops.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NRCS_2020_Evaluation-fo-Cool-Season-Cover-Crops-in-NCR.pdf).

Not all cover crops or varieties will be available or suited to all potential cost share programs. What these resources *can* do is provide you information as you explore if cover crops are right for you, and if so, what that crop might be.

Reminder: cover crops *will* be a small portion of our September 13<sup>th</sup> Tailgate Talk at Valley Falls as well. We’ll share information on grazing cover crops and how that can affect the weed suppression potential of that cover crop. Find information at [www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/](http://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/) under the Events tab on the right-hand side of the page, or contact a District Office for details.

## Overseeding Lawns

If drought or other injury has thinned your tall fescue lawn, consider a September overseeding. This will provide newly seeded turf time to establish before winter dormancy.

Start by mowing short – an inch to an inch and a half in height – and remove clippings. This will help increase chances for good seed to soil contact and allow light into the canopy. Look for a thatch layer as well. If it’s less than a quarter of an inch, you should be fine.

For seeding small spots rough up the soil with a hand rake before seeding. If seeding larger areas, consider a slit seeder or core aerator. A slit seeder helps get seed in direct soil contact, but if you are also trying to increase water infiltration, decreases compaction, and increase soil oxygen, core aeration may be your best bet. With any method, apply fertilizer according to soil test or use a blended starter according to directions on the fertilizer bag.

Ross Mosteller  
District Extension Agent  
Livestock & Natural Resources

## **Early Weaning Benefits to Cows**

There are terms thrown around that have a different interpretation depending on your situation. “Early” is exactly that in the context of this article and might be a bit late for some producers. Thinking through the value of removing calves earlier than normal and the subsequent value to cow body condition, has merit to discuss regardless of how you might define early. While much of northeast Kansas has been fortunate to receive moisture, parts of the District have cattle producers weathering an exceptionally dry grazing season and many may be considering early weaning calves.

Often discussions about early weaning focus on managing lightweight calves and the subsequent considerations on health and nutrition. Focus here will be on the benefits to the calf factory - the cow. Weaning calves 30-60 days earlier than normal, when calves are four to five months old, is an excellent management tool for producers. This single decision reduces the nutrient requirement of the cow and decreases the daily demand for forage resources, often the most over abused part of the ranching business. How does the math actually work out on this?

At about 90 days of age, calves begin to move from mothers’ milk as primary nutrition to consuming forages as a larger part of the diet. A 450 lb spring-born calf is capable of consuming approximately 7 lbs of forage per day. A dry 1350 lb cow eating 2 percent of her body weight, consumes about 27 lbs of dry forage per day. Divide the 27 lbs the cow consumes by the 7 lbs the calf consumes and that equates to about 4 days of calf forage consumption in a cow day. If calves are weaned 30-60 days early, you can gain an additional 1-2 weeks of forage to support the cow. Not only is there a forage tonnage benefit, but dry cows can generally utilize late season forage more effectively, compared to higher nutrient requirements of a growing calf.

Research at Kansas State University (Bolte et al, 2007) documented that weaning calves at 100 to 145 days of age increased body condition scores of cows grazing native pastures from an average of 5.46 to 5.85 in 120 days. The change in cow body condition score ranged from -0.25 to 0.50 of a condition score (18 to 38 pounds) on this study. These results are more impressive considering that forage quality was likely declining and yet cows were still able to increase body condition. The results of this study demonstrate that the optimum time to improve body condition on cows is immediately following weaning.

Discussion of forage management will be part of the 2022 Tailgate Talk, hosted by Matt and Marley Hamon on Tuesday, September 13, at their farm northwest of Valley Falls. In addition to NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist Dustin Schwandt and Meadowlark Extension District agents David Hallauer and Ross Mosteller, K-State Weed Science Graduate Student Lily Woitaszewski will present her work focused on the impact of pre-plant weed suppression when cover crops are grazed during the winter.

The Jefferson County Conservation District will sponsor a light meal beginning at 5:30 at the farm at 5557 190<sup>th</sup> Rd. northwest of Valley Falls (take K-16 Highway to Swabville Road then head north two and a half miles to 190<sup>th</sup>. Head west on 190<sup>th</sup> one-half mile to the Hamon Farm – watch for signs). Bring a lawn chair and spend the evening hearing some great information to help shore up your fall/winter forage resource.

To help with a meal count, please RSVP by Friday September 9<sup>th</sup> (flyer available at [www.meadowlark.k-state.edu](http://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu)) by calling the Meadowlark Extension District Oskaloosa Office at (785-863-2212) or e-mailing me ([dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu)) or Ross Mosteller at [rmostell@ksu.edu](mailto:rmostell@ksu.edu). Hope to see you there!

Teresa Hatfield  
District Extension Agent  
Family and Community Wellness

## **Annual Notice of Change Letter-Arriving in September for Medicare Beneficiaries**

Medicare beneficiaries must watch their mailbox for the Annual Notice of Change Letter (ANOC), which will arrive in September. The ANOC notice is sent to Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in Part D prescription drug plans and those with Part C Medicare Advantage plans. The ANOC is an important document that contains valuable information about your plan for 2023. Make sure that you do not toss this document out.

The ANOC letter will come from the insurance company you are enrolled in for Part D or Part C of Medicare. The ANOC will not come from Medicare itself. The packet will contain the details of your current plan and what changes will be made in 2023. Also, remember that you will not receive an ANOC letter from your Medigap/Supplement plan. The government standardizes these plans, and benefits do not change yearly, so there is no annual enrollment period.

### **What you Need to look for:**

**Formulary Changes:** Pay attention to the list of medications the plan covers. Make sure the plan will still cover the drugs you are taking.

**Premium Changes:** Many plans will change the monthly premium cost each year. What you will pay at the pharmacy: Plans may raise or lower your co-pays and co-insurance.

**Pharmacy:** Some plans have preferred pharmacies. If you use those pharmacies, you may save money on co-pays and co-insurance.

**Annual deductible:** Some plans ask you to pay the entire cost of your medication up to a certain amount before they start helping you pay for your drugs. In 2023 the maximum deductible is \$505 per year.

**Plan Availability:** Sometimes, an insurer will discontinue your current plan. If that happens, they will enroll you in another plan within the same company. Compare this plan to make sure it fits your needs.

Because of these changes, you may want to consider looking at other prescription drug plan options in 2023. You may be able to find a better plan that covers you at a lower cost. Even if you are happy with your current plan, comparing other plans might be a good idea.

Medicare Open Enrollment is from October 15-December 7, 2022, during which you can change Part D and Part C plans for the following year. The Meadowlark Extension District is currently making appointments for Medicare Open Enrollment. To make an appointment with a trained SHICK counselor, call 785-364-4125.

Cindy Williams  
District Extension Agent  
Family & Community Wellness

## **Emotional Wellness and Anxiety**

Emotional wellness is just as important as your physical wellness. One aspect is anxiety. While anxiety doesn't typically feel very good, it is a very common, human and normal reaction to stress. Occasional feelings of anxiety that come and go and that are mild are a reality of the human experience for children, youth and adults. The good news is that anxiety is not only incredibly common but also treatable.

University of Texas at Austin provides this comprehensive information about the difference between what may be normal and what may need some assistance to work with. What normal anxiety is like:

Occasional worry about circumstantial events, such as a work project or breakup, that may leave you upset, embarrassment or self-consciousness in the face of an uncomfortable social situation. Random cases of "nerves" or jitters: dizziness or sweating over an exam, presentation, or other important event. Realistic fear of a threatening object, place, or situation. Wanting to feel confident that you are healthy and living in a safe, hazard-free environment. Anxiety, sadness, or difficulty sleeping immediately following a traumatic event.

What an anxiety disorder is like:

Constant, chronic, and unsubstantiated worry that causes significant distress, disturbs your social life, and interferes with school or work. Avoidance of common social situations for fear of being judged, embarrassed, or humiliated. Repeated, random panic attacks or persistent worry and anticipation of another panic attack and feelings of terror or impending doom, irrational fear or avoidance of an object, place, or situation that poses little or no threat of danger.

Performing uncontrollable, repetitive actions, such as washing your hands repeatedly or checking things over and over. Ongoing and recurring nightmares, flashbacks, or emotional numbing relating to a traumatic event in your life that occurred several months or years ago.

Be sure to create your healthiest self! Here are some things to do to help with that and help to manage stress.

- Get enough sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Build a social support network
- Set priorities: decide what must get done and what can wait.
- Think positive
- Try relaxation methods
- Seek help, if needed