

David Hallauer

District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Corn/Soybean Disease Management Meetings

Disease management in corn used to be stalk rots in dry years, maybe some Gray Leaf Spot, and on occasion the possibility of some late season rust. Now we seem to be always on the lookout to see if Southern Rust will move in from the Gulf – or Tar Spot from the north.

Same with soybeans. Any yield loss from fungal pathogens was fairly easily mitigated with an appropriately timed fungicide application. Now we see (very vividly) the pressure from Sudden Death Syndrome and less apparent is the potential for problems like Soybean Cyst Nematode. We're even getting reports of fungicide resistance in some soybean diseases.

We'll discuss some of these issues – and potential solutions – on Wednesday, February 15th at our Corn and Soybean Disease Management Meetings. The first will begin at 8:30 a.m. with coffee and rolls courtesy of Kansas Insurance at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Nortonville (105 N. Norton Avenue). We'll repeat it at 2:00 that afternoon at the Corning Community Building (6221 5th St.) with afternoon refreshments courtesy of Ag Partners Coop. K-State Research & Extension Row Crops Pathologist Dr. Rodrigo Onofre will be our featured speaker. He'll spend 90 minutes discussing many of the issues outlined above as he shares his observations on 2022 as well as potential solutions from research trials over the last couple of years. We'll wrap up with questions and have your way in less than two hours.

RSVPs for refreshment purposes are requested (not required) by the end of business on Monday, February 13th – but we understand busy schedules, so if you can make it, come on out. Special thanks to our generous sponsors: Kansas Insurance and Ag Partners Coop. Additional information can be found by contacting the Atchison County Extension Office at (913-330-0050) or any Meadowlark Extension District Office (Holton: 785-364-4125/Seneca: 785-336-2184/Oskaloosa: 785-863-2212) or e-mail at dhallaue@ksu.edu. A flyer is available on the Meadowlark Extension District Crops & Soils page at <https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/crops-soils/index.html>. Hope to see you there.

Truth or Myth: Planting Muskmelons Next to Cucumbers Will Change Their Taste

As you make garden planting plans for the year, you may hear not to plant muskmelons next to cucumbers. The thinking is they are 'related', and cross pollination could affect taste.

The truth is, while both *do* belong to the same genus (*Cucumis*) – they cannot cross-pollinate as muskmelons have 24 chromosomes and cucumbers just 14. Even if they *did* cross, nothing would show up until the following generation when cross-pollinated seeds were planted.

During the growing season, we run in to the same question when we note squash species that don't *look* like what we planted. Again, cross-pollination isn't the issue. Fruit characteristics are determined by the mother plant and not affected by cross-pollination. As referenced before, if seed is *saved* there can be problems and who knows what we may see for fruit at that point.

Where did the weird fruit come from? Maybe we forgot what we planted. Maybe the seed we *received* had been cross pollinated before we got it. We might even see old seeds sprout from fruit the previous year. The bottom line is: don't worry about planting different cultivars of squash or cucumbers or melons close to one another unless you will save seed from those plants. Though cross-pollination may occur, the fruit will not be affected.

Ross Mosteller

District Extension Agent
Livestock & Natural Resources

Selection Indexes, Production Data or EPD's??

Although I really don't like the usual weather at this time of year, it is still one of my favorite "seasons" - Bull Sale Season! Catalogs, sale flyers, emails, video links, etc.. to all types of bull sales arrive and for cattle nerds like me, this is like a second Christmas opening each one. Every operation uses different formats and varying information is provided, so deciphering what is in front of you can be a challenge at times. If you recall in a past article, EPDs were discussed and I promised to dive into Selection Indexes, today's that day as we think about bull buying.

Twenty plus years ago at BIF in Omaha, I was intrigued by the discussion of an index that would blend particular traits and EPDs into a number, based on weighting, that would avoid single trait selection. Open sale catalogs, sire summaries or breed registry databases and indexes are now a standard offering in nearly every major, recognized beef breed. The Dairy industry has used indexes for years as well. In general, these will highlight production areas like calving ease, growth, carcass, fertility and maternal traits. Using tandem selection of multiple, weighted, traits simultaneously; is designed for ease of use by seedstock and commercial producers alike.

Each index is designed for a particular purpose and is often geared towards the breed that developed it. Much like EPDs, you need to have a basic understanding of what goes into the number and then what the number translates to. For example, the index I personally give attention is Shorthorn \$BMI or British Maternal Index. This is the expected average performance of progeny of Shorthorn bulls when mated to a British cow base. It has a balance of growth and carcass traits, with a strong maternal component. Hereford also has a \$BMI or Baldy Maternal Index, which is the expected average performance of progeny of Hereford bulls used in rotational crossbreeding programs on Angus-based cows and heifers, with the progeny marketed on a Certified Hereford Beef LLC pricing grid. All that to say \$BMI isn't the same everywhere!

The other piece of data often seen at bull sales is actual production measures like weights, ultrasound data, ratios, etc... How and where does this come into play? There are folks who will look only at actual birth or weaning weight, not paying any attention to EPDs or complementary Indexes. The flip is true as well. Each producer has their own philosophy and emphasis on what is important, but utilizing all available data should be considered to make the most informed decision. Actual performance data goes into the generation of EPDs and in turn Indexes, so the general comment is to emphasize those values over actual data, as they tend to be a better predictor of future performance. Dam production ratios are an important factor to consider.

I'm a data guy (*just ask my family about the hundreds of spreadsheets I study at night*) and I'd never suggest that data not be used, but nothing can replace a visual appraisal of phenotype. Too often really good confirmation animals, who can create a positive change in biological type, are overlooked due to lower numbers. The flip side is true as well. Bulls who wouldn't yield a premium on visual appraisal as steers, are kept and selected as sires. It is all about balance in evaluation and knowing what your operational needs are.

If you don't know or understand these index values (or any of the data), ASK! Extension agents can be a good resource. The breeders who are offering seedstock have an understanding and are willing to help you navigate decisions. Many even offer "quick picks", star ratings or other streamlined selection tools. The Iowa Beef Center has a detailed fact sheet that helps to explain the various breed selection indexes called [Breed Association \\$Value Indexes Fact Sheet](#), check it out for more information. Good luck selecting your next herd sire, he contributes half the genetic contribution to your herd. This is an important decision that deserves some thought and consideration, using all the tools available to you.

Teresa Hatfield

District Extension Agent
Family and Community Wellness

February is American Heart Month

It's time to follow your heart. February is the month of love, cupid, candy hearts, and Valentines; it's also an excellent time to consider your heart health. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), people who have close relationships at home, work, church, or in their communities are more likely to be healthier and live longer. By using the support of others, we can strive to reach goals that support heart health, and what better time to do so than in February?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for 1 out of every four deaths. Most middle-aged and young adults have one or more risk factors for heart disease, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, or being overweight. Having more than one risk factor puts you at even greater risk. There are things you can do to lower your risks.

An excellent place to start is with physical activity. Invite family, friends, colleagues, or community members to join you on a brisk walk. Get a friend to join an exercise class (we have several options in the Meadowlark Extension District). Put on some music and dance in your living room. You should aim for 150 minutes of physical activity weekly or 30 minutes daily for five days. Don't think you have 30 minutes to spare; try exercising in 10-minute chunks three times per day.

Make sure you know your numbers. Paying attention to your blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and body mass index (BMI) is essential. Two numbers, diastolic and systolic, measure blood pressure. The systolic is when the heart is pumping blood away from the heart, and the diastolic is the pressure between the beats of your heart. Hypertension or high blood pressure is when those two numbers are higher than normal. Normal blood pressure is when the systolic number is less than 120 mm Hg, and the diastolic is less than 80 mm Hg. For your cholesterol numbers, your triglycerides should be less than 150 mg/dL, your low-density lipoprotein (LDL or bad cholesterol) should be less than 130 mg/dl, and your high-density lipoprotein (HDL or good cholesterol) should be higher than 40 mg/dL for men and higher than 50 mg/dL for women. Try and keep your body mass index (BMI) below 25. The BMI measures body fat based on height and weight, healthy, overweight, or obese.

If you smoke, quit. Ask others for support or join an online support group. Smoking is a significant cause of cardiovascular disease and causes one in every four deaths. People exposed to secondhand smoke can also suffer from cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Take steps to manage your stress. Know and understand what your signs of stress are; everyone is different. If you experience constant stress, you may have high blood pressure, which can lead to a greater risk of a heart attack or stroke. Make time in your daily life to do things that help reduce your stress. Reducing stress might include taking a walk, relaxing by listening to music, reading a book, or taking a warm bath.

For more information on American Heart month visit National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI at <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>).

Cindy Williams

District Extension Agent
Family & Community Wellness

Keeping Children Warm and Safe

If goes without saying that we have unpredictable weather here in Kansas. It could be spring-like one day and have negative wind chills the next. Being prepared for those big temperature swings can make it a challenge but add to that the wintery mix of snow and sleet and you could have trouble on your hands if you're not prepared.

The Academy of Pediatrics recently released their recommendations for keeping infants, toddlers, and young people warm during this roller-coaster ride we call winter in Kansas!

What to wear:

- Dress infants and children warmly for outdoor activities. Several thin layers will keep them dry and warm. Always remember warm boots, gloves, or mittens, and a hat.
- The rule of thumb for older babies and young children is to dress them in one more layer of clothing than an adult would wear in the same conditions.
- When riding in the car, babies and children should wear thin, snug layers rather than thick, bulky coats or snowsuits. There are a lot of adorable outfits available, but that doesn't mean they are the safest for wearing when bundled into a car seat.
- Blankets, quilts, pillows, bumpers, sheepskins and other loose bedding should be kept out of an infant's sleeping environment because they are associated with suffocation deaths. It is better to use sleeping clothing like one-piece sleepers or wearable blankets.
- If a blanket must be used to keep a sleeping infant warm, it should be thin and tucked under the crib mattress, reaching only as far as the baby's chest, for the infant's face is less likely to become covered by bedding material.