K-STATE Research and Extension | Meadowlark District

July 25, 2025

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Transition Planning: Step Eight – SWOT Analysis

Strengths. Weaknesses. Opportunities. Threats. A SWOT Analysis doesn't have to be an intimidating process. In many cases, it's what we're doing subconsciously every day when we ask ourselves if we should be doing something different or how we might improve something we're already doing. The only difference: we need to write it down so we can put it into action. In fact, an annual SWOT Analysis for *any* business is probably a good thing.

Think of the analysis as both an internal *and* external evaluation. Strengths and Weaknesses are the internal side. They're often items within the control of the business owner. Opportunities and Threats require a look *outside* the business. They're the issues you can't necessarily control, but that you *might* be able to mitigate to reduce the impact on your business. Together, they can provide a wide-angle view of a lot of factors influencing the farm business.

One of the important factors influencing the accuracy and depth of your SWOT Analysis will be who you include in the process. Owners/operators are the core, but the process should also include anyone with a vested interest in the success of the business: managers, family members employed by the business, hired employees, etc. It should also include input from outside advisors such as financial institutions, accountants, attorneys, and other trusted 'partners' that support/advise the business year in and year out. While input can/should be 'filtered' based on the stake any/all of the above may have in the business, it's important to at the very least collect the input to consider versus not having it at all.

Make it as simple or complex as you want, but do *not* leave the results on a shelf to gather dust. A SWOT Analysis should be a regular business task. Need questions to help you get started? E-mail me for links to a couple of resources or find them under the Step 8 links of the Transition Planning section at: https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/crops-soils/.

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Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Control Flies on Livestock

There is an insect pest that can cause much annoyance and economic loss to livestock and humans alike. What am I referring to? Flies are a typical summertime problem for many of us. This week I would like to take a look at some of the major fly problems in livestock operations.

It's summertime once again, so the flies are here in force. In fact, their populations are growing in many animal production facilities, including cattle operations. To achieve the best control, management and prevention of flies, it is important to know what fly species is causing the problem in each situation. Three fly species are major pests of cattle – horn flies, stable flies and house flies. The following are the basics about all three producers should know.

Horn Flies - Male and female horn flies bite and feed on the blood of animals. They are about half the size of house flies. Horn flies usually gather on the shoulders, back and sides of animals. On hot days they move to the underside of the belly. Unlike other flies, they stay on the animal and leave only when disturbed or when females lay eggs in fresh animal feces. The ways to control horn flies, include ear tags, sprays, pour-ons, dust sprays and back rubbers.

There are several brands of all of these for producers to choose from. Typically, we think of one ear tag per animal as good enough. This may be the case for horn flies because not every animal needs to be tagged for horn fly control. Tagging every third animal with one tag will provide good control, as horn flies move between animals and eventually will take blood from the tagged animal – which will kill the fly. Try rotating two years on organophosphate tags, one year on pyrethroid tags, two years on organophosphate tags, and so on.

Stable Flies - Male and female stable flies bite and feed on blood from animals and people. They leave black or dark red spots on surfaces where they rest. With respect to cattle, bites most often occur on the legs. A typical reaction to stable flies by cattle is bunching up and standing in water, which helps protect from bites, but reduces feeding and decreases weight gain. Larvae develop in manure mixed with soil, straw or hay, as well as in decaying spilled grain and fermenting grass clippings. Development of the stable fly from egg to adult takes three to four weeks.

Currently, there are no effective control methods for stable flies on pastured cattle. Research indicates that stable flies in pastures develop in sites where round hay bales are fed to cattle during the winter. Steps should be taken to minimize hay waste and accumulation or to spread the wasted hay into thin layers.

House Flies - Despite their name, house flies can be found outdoors as well as in. House flies do not bite but can transmit food-borne and animal pathogens. House flies generate brown or yellow spots on walls and other surfaces where they rest. They are common from spring to late fall. House fly larvae can develop in any decaying organic substrate, including manure, compost and garbage. Under ideal conditions, development from egg to adult takes only 8 days.

The key to controlling house flies is a good sanitation program that includes maintaining good drainage, cleaning around feed bunks, under fences and gates, and around water systems.
Another means of control are baits and residual sprays that can help control house flies. Baits are available in granular form or a form that can be dissolved in water for paint-on application. Sprays are applied where the flies rest.

Kansas State Research and Extension has the following publications, which can be found at your local Extension office or on the KSRE homepage, relating to the topic of fly control for livestock. Managing Stable Fly Production at Pasture Feeding Sites (MF-2662), Managing Insect Problems on Beef Cattle (C671), Lice Mange and Other Swine Insect Problems (C676), Managing Insect Pest on Sheep and Goats (MF977).

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Becoming a Master Gardener

Calling all gardeners! This September the Meadowlark District will resume our Extension Master Gardener (EMG) program. If you love to garden, or if you have never gardened but always wanted to, this is the program for you.

The Extension Master Gardener program, or EMG, is a staple of K-State Research and Extension. The program offers extensive horticulture training on topics ranging from lawn care and to soil fertility, to common plant diseases. These topics are supplemented with hands-on gardening practice and volunteer work. Beyond the learning experiences, EMG programs actively work to embed themselves in their communities and create collaborative and welcoming environments.

The EMG training runs from September through November with a total of 40 hours of training. Each session is taught by different specialists from K-State who share their expertise with our groups. All training courses are recorded and posted online for those who cannot participate in real time. After training, all Master Gardeners complete 40 hours of volunteer work, focusing on educating and inspiring others in their community.

You can email lauraphillips@ksu.edu or call any of our offices to learn more about the program or sign up.

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Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Walk Toward Relief: How Walking Can Ease Arthritis Pain

As we get older, we are more likely to experience arthritis pain. Arthritis is a condition that affects the joints, causing inflammation and pain. Over 100 conditions affecting the joints are considered Arthritis, including osteoarthritis (the most common), rheumatoid Arthritis, and fibromyalgia. Some risk factors for Arthritis include aging, being female, being overweight, previous injury, and muscle weakness. Exercising with Arthritis can be challenging. Many people with Arthritis avoid exercise because of the pain; however, this can make joints stiffer and less flexible.

Walking with Arthritis may be a solution to help reduce pain and manage symptoms. Walking is gentle on the joints and helps lubricate and keep them flexible. The benefits of walking are hard to ignore. Walking is safe and puts less stress on the body than other forms of aerobic exercise, so it is excellent for people with Arthritis. Walking helps strengthen the muscles surrounding the joints, particularly in the knees and hips. Walking promotes synovial fluid circulation, which helps nourish the cartilage and maintain joint flexibility.

Remember to always talk with your healthcare provider before starting any exercise program. Be sure to warm up before you exercise with slow, gentle stretches, and cool down slowly after your walk by slowing your pace and stretching afterwards. Start your new routine slowly and add minutes gradually with time. Select a good pair of shoes with good insoles that absorb shock. Track your activity using a fitness tracker or by keeping an exercise journal.

If you don't have a walking routine, K-State Extension-Meadowlark District has the perfect program to help you start. Beginning August 4, 2025, the district and the Delaware Township Library in Valley Falls will offer the Arthritis Foundation Walk with Ease program. This program will help you learn how to walk safely with your Arthritis. The program's goals are to understand the basics of Arthritis, learn how to exercise safely and comfortably, and learn tips and strategies to help you "stick with it". Each participant who signs up will receive a Walk with Ease guidebook.

If you want to participate in the Walk with Ease Program, please get in touch with Jeri with the Delaware Township Library at 785-224-9811 or email lajeclark@yahoo.com. For more information about the Walk with Ease Program, contact Teresa Hatfield with K-State Extension Meadowlark District at 785-364-4124 or email thatfield@ksu.edu.

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

No news article this week.