

David Hallauer  
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

## After the Harvest

Most of the effort we put into hay ground management focuses on what we do *before* harvest but *after* harvest management can be important as well. With what needs done between now and the end of the growing season, it might seem a waste to return to where you've already been, particularly if it's not all that convenient to get there. It can however be an exercise with benefits extending into future growing seasons.

Weed pressure issues once masked by desirable forage species might show up more readily once the hay has been harvested. This is especially true of warm season weeds emerging in cool season grass stands. Grassy weeds like foxtail and broomsedge and broadleaf invaders like hemp dogbane and sericea thrive in our late summer conditions when cool season grasses don't compete as well. In some cases, the emerging plants might be unsightly but are of little consequence. Others are awaiting an opening in the stand to expand their footprint. Being on top of issues early is often a better option than waiting until later.

Unfortunately, late season insect issues have been an increasing concern for some growers as well. Fall armyworm migrations commonly bring at least *some* level of feeding injury to summer harvested hay stands. If stands have good regrowth and if drought or excessive heat aren't adding further hurdles to stand recovery, they could do a fair bit of feeding, and we'd never notice. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for us to encounter less than optimum late season weather that hinders post-harvest stand recovery. At those times, fall armyworms can cause complications – and longer-term recovery issues for the stand.

Years of research provides us with the harvest recommendations we make. Some are designed to balance forage quality with quantity (learn more about that research in companion articles from myself and District Livestock/Natural Resources Agent Ross Mosteller in the most recent edition of our District Newsletter: <https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/news/> ). Others help optimize the ability of the desired forage to better compete with the undesirables. Set aside some time for return visits to stands as the summer progresses. The growing season window for most of our forages and the issues that plague them are long. A little attention now just might help you avoid longer term issues later.

Ross Mosteller  
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

### **Animal Proteins on the Plate**

This column is being written the day before the celebration of our nation's independence, an obviously important day for the United States, but also a benchmark day for the summer grilling season. As a beef producer, it is easy for me to go to the freezer to grab a package of steaks or ground beef, but those doing so in the grocery store have seen the impact of tighter beef supplies, reflected in price. Let's be real, the price of everything has been on the increase! The final topic from BIF that I'd like to tackle is *"Today's beef consumer: who are they, what do they say and what do they want?"* presented by Dr. Mandy Carr, Sr. Executive Director, Scientific Affairs, NCBA.

A plethora of consumer surveys and evaluation was referenced in Dr. Carr's presentation, visit: <https://beefimprovement.org> to look at the full presentation and excellent graphics within. Certainly, at a beef focused conference, beef was the presentation lens, but for the most part there was good news for all the animal proteins. Since 2021 consumers saying they are likely to eat beef was up two percentage points, chicken three points and the positive for all animal proteins is that meat alternatives saw a seven-point DECREASE in preference. Animal protein substitutes only account for 0.4% of the total fresh meat market share.

Consumer demand is driven by three major factors: Consumption, Preference and Value. Factors such as eating experience directly drive preference, while others such as purchasing specialty labeled meat, such as locally grown, are driven by value. Beef continues to lead the pack when the eating experience is discussed, besting chicken by more than twenty-five percentage points when considering taste. Chicken does still rank first in protein source selection among consumers at forty three percent compared to beef's thirty six percent.

Another interesting insight was that three quarters of all meals are prepared at home and ninety-four percent of consumers report that they intend to cook more meals at home in the future. This speaks about the need to have meat cuts that are convenient and easy to prepare. In addition to cooking more at home, the way consumers purchase meat and other groceries is evolving. While most of the meat is still purchased in grocery stores, online sales are increasing. Nearly two thirds of purchasers under the age of 45 report that at least some of their shopping is now done online.

Many discussions throughout the industry revolve around the demand side of the equation and what the consumer is willing to pay for meat protein products. Data in this presentation showed that fresh meat sales have seen an 8.4% increase in dollar value sales and a 4.0% increase in poundage sales across all sources in the current year. The only negative trend is in meat alternatives, all good signs for those in the animal protein business. Beef leads the fresh meat sales, and it appears that consumers are changing behaviors to maximize protein purchases.

A quarter of consumers are familiar with how livestock are raised for food, with over two thirds claiming to consider how the animal was raised when purchasing meat, with the top priority being animal welfare. Hormones/antibiotics/vaccines, food safety and environmental impacts are also considerations for those who have concerns. Quality assurance programs seem to have a positive effect on the perception of most consumers, which speaks to the need to continue to have more producer's quality assurance certified through the programs offered by the various species.

Producers can get focused on many facets of livestock production, from feeding to reproduction to production economics, but let us never forget that consumer preferences need to be considered as well. Much of the work summarized above is a direct result of checkoff dollars at work. Let's all do our part to keep animal protein on the plate!

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Laura Phillips  
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

No news article this week.

Teresa Hatfield  
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

### **Protect Yourself from Unwanted Calls and Text Messages**

As technology continues to evolve, scammers use innovations to create more believable scams that are harder to detect. Ninety percent of U.S. adults report receiving a scam weekly, many of which are in the form of calls and text messages. And while these messages are frustrating, they can also be physically and financially dangerous.

All of us can be victims of scams and fraud. Fraudsters often target people they believe are vulnerable; they want our money. They will use any tactic to trick us into handing it over. At one time or another, we will all receive an unwanted text or cell phone call.

You may receive a call, email, text, or message on social media that looks like it's from someone you know. It may state that there is a problem with your account, you have won a prize, and it tells you to call or click a link. The problem is that the message is not from someone you know but a scammer. One tactic scammers use is called "spoofing". Spoofing uses technology to make a name, organization, or government entity appear on your caller ID as if they are the caller, when it is a scammer on the line. You can't trust caller ID because phone numbers can be faked. Here is what you need to do.

Stop. If you get an unexpected call, email, or text, even if it looks familiar, don't call or click any links. This message is more than likely a scam. Do not talk or respond to the person who is calling you. Do not have a conversation with them. Talking with them "just to mess with them" could lead to unwanted consequences. Scammers can record your voice to clone it using AI in future attacks. Conversing with them also encourages them to call again, and they may be able to extract personal information from you.

The best thing to do is to hang up. Do not respond or click links if it's a text message. Block the caller and report to the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov). or call 1-877-FTC-Help (1-877-382-4357). Keep vigilant and be aware. Stay informed and talk to your friends and family about the prevalence of fraud and scams. Remember to check in on vulnerable friends and family members and stay safe out there.

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

### **Shelf Life of Mrs. Wages Mixes**

Mrs. Wages makes several packaged mixes to help make home canning quick and easy. All of their products for canning use the water bath canning method. But do the mixes have a shelf life?

Mrs. Wages recommendation:

“On the side of every Mrs. Wages® pouch is an 8-digit code that you can use to determine when the product was produced, and you will find it stamped into the packet, for example B2181A23. The B identified the facility that produced the mix. The numbers, which follows, represents the last digit of the year the mix was produced, e.g., a 2 would indicate 2012. The next three numbers indicate which day out of 365 days in the year, the mix was produced. So, if the number is 181, it means the product was mixed on June 29<sup>th</sup> as this is the 181<sup>st</sup> day of the year. The final 3 digits are used by Kent Precision Foods to indicate the Batch code. For optimal performance, we recommend using Mrs. Wages® Pickle, Tomato, Fruit mixes and Fruit Pectins within 24 months of the day and year, it was produced.”