K-STATE Research and Extension | Meadowlark District

October 10, 2025

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Stop Scouting When…

A wise entomologist told me this summer if someone told me they had all the answers about fall armyworms - don't believe them. After another summer of feeding damage, I understand a little more about his claims of their unpredictability.

By this time of summer/fall, you'd think we'd be well past additional feeding injury. Conventional wisdom for a non-overwintering pest such as this would suggest they might be out of here by mid-October – and maybe they will be – but don't stop scouting just yet.

One of the things we *do* know about fall armyworms is they don't survive freezing temperatures. They overwinter only in areas with suitable host plants and where temperatures rarely fall below 50 degrees F. With that in mind, even if you don't like colder temperatures, you might embrace them at least a little if you are ready for fall armyworm season to be done.

Unfortunately, those temperatures aren't coming as quickly as we'd like to see for this pest. While historical averages say we typically see frost in the next couple weeks and a freeze by early November, climate prediction models suggest a 60-80 percent chance of *above* normal temperatures through October – and at least the potential for additional fall feeding.

Ultimately, it means you can start scouting when…we reach freezing. Until then, there's an opportunity for additional generations. They may not be as large in number as previous ones and development will likely be slower for those that are here, but it doesn't mean giving up scouting altogether. Tender brome regrowth and newly seeded grass crops will be particularly attractive sites for egg laying. Local pheromone trap numbers have been low for a couple of weeks, and while that's a good thing, it doesn't mean scouting shouldn't continue. Forages trying to recover prior and newly seeded grasses trying to get established before dormancy need the right combination of factors to come together to help them survive the winter. Being consumed by fall armyworms is not part of that right combination.

It's a broken record, but one that still has to be played. Recent moisture has helped kick off some stand recovery. As you're monitoring that recovery, it's a great time to monitor the potential for additional fall armyworm feeding as well. With any luck, it won't be an issue, but better safe than sorry.

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Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Cattle Working Facilities

When you sell livestock via private treaty, your cattle facilities are indirectly exposed to lots of folks. I'm in an enviable position to very often receive compliments towards the facilities on my family's operation. Having a brother who is extremely handy with a welder and fencing building is a huge plus! It hasn't always been that way, and it has taken a capital investment to make facility improvements. With cattle prices where they are today, now is a good time to look at investing into cattle handling facilities.

Weaning time is one point in the year when working facilities get a workout and when thinking about either improving the existing facilities or building something new comes to the forefront. Cattle handling can be time consuming, physically demanding and potentially dangerous in unfavorable situations. Because of this it is important that corrals and facilities are constructed to confine cattle safely and efficiently for close observation and to perform routine health and management procedures. Not all cattle operations are the same and needs in a feedyard don't exactly match those for a cow/calf operation. Designing cattle working facilities with detailed planning is important to ensure that the facilities meet these needs as well as providing for efficient future expansion. Reducing animal stress, making the most efficient use of labor and minimizing the risk of injury to both humans and cattle is the goal of a well designed and built cattle handling facility.

The basic components of cattle working facility include holding/sorting pens and alley, crowing area – most commonly sweep tub or Bud Box, working chute with alleyway and a loadout. The holding/sorting pens serve as the initial catch pens for cattle. Cattle are then sorted and processed into a crowding area for purpose of sending through an alleyway leading to a loadout chute or squeeze chute and head catch. The squeeze chute is where health and management procedures are administered.

Understanding basic behavior principles results in good corral designs which take advantage of cattle's natural instincts. When cattle behavior is considered in designing a working system, it results in improved corral and working facility plans. Fight or flight mentality generally wires cattle to "flight" where they return to basic herd mentality. Cattle want to see the handler, go around you, be with other cattle and return to where they have been. Utilizing these instincts and knowing that the greatest desire of the cattle is to get out of the facility, can help with design.

If you are in a situation to design and position a new set of working facilities, the first consideration is location. Corrals should be easily accessible by trucks and trailers under all types of weather conditions. They need to be accessible to major pastures or paddocks for easy movement of cattle into the facilities. Working facilities should be placed along a central fence line in an area where several fence lines and/or pastures come together. Drainage is another important consideration when selecting a site for working facilities. The site should be well drained to avoid mud and sanitation problems caused by standing water. Avoid sites that are directly adjacent to neighboring residences, where dust, flies, noise, and odor might be an issue in being a good neighbor.

Properly designed cattle working facilities are a long-term investment that should be thoroughly considered and planned before construction. No system is ever completely perfect and even in the best thought-out plans, there will be things that could be modified after cattle are run through them. However, proper planning can pay dividends in terms of benefits to both cattle and handlers. Kansas State University has a couple of good resources found in Designing a Bud Box for Cattle Handling - MF3349 and Planning and Designing Cattle Feedlots MF2316 to help in design.

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Storing extra pesticides over the winter

When winter comes, you may be wondering how and if you can store any leftover pesticides or herbicides from your lawn or garden over the winter. The label on the chemical should have storage instructions. If there are instructions, follow those first. If you cannot find the storage instructions, you can also call the manufacturer. But in cases where the chemical does not specify how to store it in the winter, there are some rules of thumb you can follow.

The first guideline is to keep the chemical in a safe location. You want it out of reach of children and animals. It should be in its original container with the label on it, and tightly closed. Many pesticides can be flammable, so keep them away from heaters or open flames.

It can get trickier trying to ensure that the pesticides are kept at an ideal temperature. Pesticides, especially liquids, should be kept away from freezing temperatures. This comes down to the way that liquid pesticides are formed. Similar to medications, you can broadly separate the ingredients in a pesticide or herbicide into two categories: active ingredients and inactive ingredients. The active ingredients are the things that kill the pest or weed. The inactive ingredients (like solvents and emulsifiers) are other additives that help the active ingredients to do their job. The solvent allows the pesticide to dissolve and form a liquid that can penetrate a plants leaf. Emulsifiers are responsible for keeping active ingredients suspended in the solvent.

If a liquid pesticide freezes, the active ingredients may separate from the solvents and emulsifiers, and the emulsifiers may become inactive or even crystalize. If a liquid chemical has been exposed to freezing temperatures, you may notice crystals or granules from the emulsifiers separating when you look inside the container. The type of solvent in the pesticide, however, may lower its freezing point, so some liquids can handle lower temperatures than others.

If your liquid pesticide has been frozen, you may be able to re-suspend the contents by thawing and agitating the container depending on the pesticide. In this scenario, you should call the manufacturer to get instructions on how to re-suspend the pesticide. Other times you just need to discard it. The other risk is that when liquids freeze and thaw, they expand and contract, which can cause plastic containers to break and create a hazardous spill. Generally low temperatures do not damage powders and granules, although they are more susceptible to damage from moisture and humidity.

The best practice is to not stockpile pesticides and only buy them as you need them. Even if you store it properly, many pesticides loose potency after two years.

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Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Everyone Can Prevent Medicare Fraud

Fraud costs Medicare an estimated $60 billion per year. It costs Medicare beneficiaries in time, stress, their medical identities, and even their health. It costs families, friends, and caregivers worry and lost work when helping their loved ones recover from falling victim to Medicare fraud. At this time of year, we see an increase in instances of Medicare fraud and abuse.

Medicare fraud has a devastating impact on both beneficiaries and the Medicare program. The Senior Medicare Patrol program educates individuals on how to prevent Medicare fraud. By preventing fraud, this program helps individuals and protects the Medicare program.

Everyone can play a part in the fight against fraud. Here are some steps you can take to combat Medicare fraud.

Medicare beneficiaries: Monitor your insurance statements to ensure that the products and services received match what is listed on your statements. Keep a record of your healthcare appointments and services you receive, and compare this to your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN).

Caregivers: Be on the lookout for items such as durable medical equipment (like boxes of knee braces) that may have been shipped to the beneficiary without their or their doctor's approval. They can remind their client or loved one to never give out their Medicare number or other personal information over the phone.

Families: talk to your loved ones about protecting their Medicare number just as they would a credit card number. Create a Medicare.gov account to access your Medicare statements online or remind yourself to open and review them when they arrive in the mail.

Healthcare providers: educate patients about healthcare-related scams, such as those involving durable medical equipment and genetic testing schemes. Remember that products and services should only be ordered by physicians whom they regularly see. Medical items that are needed should never be ordered through TV ads or unsolicited calls.

Community members: look out for older neighbors. Encourage those they know to consult a trusted source for their Medicare questions and inform neighbors about the latest Medicare scams.

Your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program can help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can assist you with questions, concerns, or complaints regarding potential fraud and abuse issues.

For questions about Medicare fraud and abuse, contact the Meadowlark Extension District, your local SMP, and the Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) program, Teresa Hatfield, thatfield@ksu.edu or 785-634-4125.

Source: Senior Medicare Patrol

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Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent, Family & Community Wellness

Active Gifts to Help Children

What gift do most kids want on their wish list for the holidays or any upcoming birthday? Probably some type of technology—from smartphones to tablets, to the latest video game. Before purchasing a gift that promotes more time in front of a screen, consider some options that help kids and families stay active throughout the year.

Why should we be concerned about children spending too much time in front of a screen? According to the American Academy of=vi Pediatrics (AAP), Overuse of digital media and sleep problems as well as negatively affect their performance at school. Here are the latest recommendations on media use From the AAP:

- Children younger than 18 months: With the exception of video-chatting, the use of screen media should be discouraged.
- Children ages 2-5: Limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs, such as shows that…..Parents should watch.

  Media with children helps them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.
- Children ages 6 and older: Parents should place consistent limits on the time spent and types of media used. Make sure media does not
  Take the place of sleep, physical activity and other behaviors needed for good health.
- Additional considerations: Establish media-free time together as a family such as an evening meal or driving the car. Assign media-free locations at home,
  Such as bedrooms or dining rooms.