KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

August 14, 2026

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

**Lime and Forage Stands**

Most standard soil test results include a measure of soil pH and a corresponding recommendation for lime when needed based on the crop being grown. Research has long shown the value of appropriate pH levels for optimizing production, and while it's been standard practice to apply lime in field crops, forage crops shouldn't be ignored. Mississippi State University Extension forage specialist Rocky Lemus recently made these statements:

*"Liming becomes a critical management practice to neutralize soil acidity, enhance nutrient availability and boost forage productivity,"*

*"Liming must be the first target of any fertility program before any other nutrients are added to the system."*

The reason for the focus on lime focus by Dr. Lemus (and others) comes down to nutrient availability and crop nutrient use efficiency. Simply put, if we keep pH in an ideal range (it varies by crop and nutrient, but a goal would be around 6.0 and above), we help keep nutrients we *do* apply more plant available. When we venture outside of optimum ranges, the efficiency of our applications can be compromised. Essentially, we're applying recommended nutrients, but the plant can't efficiently utilize them to enhance production. That's not great when margins are good – but it can really hit the pocketbook when margins are tight.

With haying winding down and as we approach the back half of the grazing season, it's a good time to start thinking about what your soil fertility plan might look like for next season. A soil test is a great place to start and soil pH should be a focus. If pH levels are low enough that nutrient availability and efficiency could be a concern, a lime application may be in order. While that will come at a cost, there's also a cost to *not* addressing low pH levels. A soil test can help you get a first look at where to focus fertilizer dollars in 2027.

For more information on soil testing, drop me a line. Soil testing isn't complicated, but there are some small things you can do to help get the most out of your sampling and results.

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Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

**Anemic Summer Cattle**

In following the KDA motivation from last week, Theileria orientalis updates have a bit of a shock value to those unfamiliar with the disease. This is the time of year when anaplasmosis can rear its ugly head as well. Today we will look at these two diseases which both cause anemia and potentially death in cattle and other ruminant animals.

While Theileria orientalis Ikeda (Theileria) and Anaplasma marginale (anaplasmosis) both infect red blood cells, cause their breakdown which leads to anemia/similar symptoms; they have different causative organisms. Theileria is a protozoal organism and anaplasmosis is bacterial, both of which are transmitted by blood feeding parasites like ticks, biting flies, mosquitoes and lice. Mechanical transmission with blood contamination on equipment such as needles, dehorning, castration and tagging equipment is possible too.

Symptoms include elevated temperature, depression, increased respiration, weight loss, pale and/or jaundice mucous membranes around the eyes and vulva. Pregnant animals may abort and death of the animal is possible, especially in situations causing stress and increased activity. Two key differences can be noted. The first and most notable is that Theileria can be found in any age of animal and anaplasmosis is typically found in older cattle. Theileria infected animals often are not as aggressive as anaplasmosis symptomatic animals.

The disease stages begin with incubation, progress to clinical expression and then animals enter a carrier status. Incubation period ranges from one to eight weeks. By the time clinical disease symptoms express themselves, it is likely that a large percentage of the herd will have exposure. Some animals may become severely clinical, while others may have no expression of the disease. Animals who do not succumb to the infection will become life-long carriers, rarely developing clinical disease again.

Treatment is very different between these anemia causing diseases. Unfortunately, there is no approved treatments or vaccines for Theileria, as it is a protozoan. Anaplasmosis can be treated with oxytetracycline injections and/or oral products. There has been some work done with experimental anaplasmosis vaccines, but they are not readily available. Prevention becomes the best option and includes management practices to prevent the transmission of blood between animals.

The Asian longhorned tick is the major player in Theileria, which has been confirmed in Kansas. However, it appears that most of the current infections in Kansas come from importation of infected animals from states that have well established populations of Theileria infected cattle. The use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices to control insect and tick pressure is key. Pasture management using fire, brush control and rotational grazing can help reduce tick presence as well. Changing needles and disinfecting blood contaminated equipment between animals is another prevention tactic.

As is always the case with animal health related issues, work with your herd health veterinarian to develop a plan for your herd and situation. K-State has an excellent publication in the online bookstore entitled "Anaplasmosis" MF-2212 and the University of Missouri has one entitled "Theileria orientalis: An Emerging Cattle Disease in Missouri" G2113 to learn more.

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

No news article this week.

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Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

**Preparing for Medicare Open Enrollment Before It Starts: Create a Medicare Account**

Medicare Open Enrollment begins October 15 and runs through December 7. While that may seem like plenty of time, now is a great opportunity to prepare by creating a secure Medicare account at Medicare.gov. Having an online account can make the enrollment process easier and more efficient, especially if you plan to meet with a Medicare counselor to review your coverage options.

A Medicare account provides quick access to important information without having to wait for paper notices to arrive in the mail. For example, you can view your Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs) online as soon as they become available rather than waiting for the quarterly mailing. Reviewing claims regularly can help you identify billing errors and spot potential Medicare fraud sooner.

Another helpful feature is the ability to view a list of prescription medications filled during the past 12 months. During Open Enrollment, this information can be transferred directly into the Medicare Plan Finder tool, saving time and reducing the need to manually enter each medication and dosage when comparing drug plans for the coming year.

Your Medicare account also allows you to print a replacement copy of your Medicare card if you have misplaced the original. In addition, you can access Medicare publications, including the annual *Medicare & You* handbook. The account also provides a convenient place to review and update personal information, such as your mailing address, and to view details about your current Medicare coverage, including Part D prescription drug plans, Medicare Advantage plans, and Medigap policies.

Creating a Medicare account is simple. Visit the https://www.medicare.gov website and select "Create an Account." You will need your Medicare number and your Part A effective date, both of which can be found on your red, white, and blue Medicare card. You will also be asked to provide your last name, date of birth, ZIP code, and email address. The final steps include creating a username and password, selecting security questions, and setting up multi-factor authentication for added security.

Taking a few minutes now to create your Medicare account can save time and help make Open Enrollment less stressful when it arrives.

Creating a Medicare.gov account before Open Enrollment begins can help Medicare beneficiaries access claims information, maintain an up-to-date medication list, print replacement Medicare cards, and review current coverage details. Establishing an account now can make comparing plans during Open Enrollment faster, easier, and more secure.

K-State Extension Meadowlark District Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) program provides free, unbiased information to help Medicare beneficiaries understand their coverage options. If you need assistance reviewing Medicare plans during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, call 785-364-4125 to schedule an appointment. Help is available at all three Meadowlark District offices located in Holton, Oskaloosa, and Seneca.

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

**It's Apple Season!!**

As fall season approaches, apples are starting to ripen and soon will be harvested. Today, there are over 2,500 varieties of fresh apple flavors of apples grown in the United States. To help enjoy the variety of fresh apples flavors year-round, consider preserving them to add to your menu.

Apples can be preserved in a number of ways: dried or made into applesauce or apple butter, a delicious apple-pear jam or a tasty pie filling. Choose the preserving method that is best for your apple variety. Some examples include:

- Freezing—Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Jonathan, Rome Beauty and Stayman
- Applesauce and apple butter—Golden Delicious, Gravenstein, Johnathan, McIntosh, Rome Beauty and Stayman

To select apples at peak maturity, look for these signs:

- Color Change: As apples mature, the skin color at the stem and calyx basin at the bottom of the apple turns from an immature green to a light-yellow color. Some apples will develop a red skin color before they are ripe, so that's not a reliable indication of maturity.
- Flavor: This is a good guide if you are familiar with the apples, you have and know how they should taste. Even if you do not know the characteristic flavor of the kind of apple you have, you can still sample slices of a few apples and decide if they have a sweet flavor. If the apples are not ready to harvest, they will taste starchy, or immature. If apples have already fallen and taste a bit starchy, store them for a period to see if they become sweeter.
- Flesh color: As apples mature and starches change to sugars, the flesh changes from a very light green to white. You can see the difference when you cut a thin slice and hold it up to the light.
- Days from bloom: The number of days from bloom is a reliable guide for general maturity time, though weather conditions will have some influence. Some kinds of apples and approximate days from bloom to maturity are Jonathan---135, Delicious ---145, Golden Delicious---145 and Winesap---155.
- Seed color: The seeds of most apples change from light green to brown as the fruits ripen. This indicator should be combined with other changes, since it is not absolute.

Preserve apples as soon as possible after harvest. If any apples must be stored, keep them in a cool, dark place. They should not be tightly covered or wrapped up; a perforated plastic or open paper bag, basket or wooden crate are good choices. If kept in the refrigerator, apples should be placed in the humidifier compartment, in a plastic bag with several holes punched in it or in a zipper-type vegetable bag to prevent loss of moisture and crispness.

Apples should not be placed close to foods with strong odors. For more information about preserving apples and some USDA approved apple recipes, contact your local Meadowlark Extension District Office in Oskaloosa, Holton or Seneca or contact me at 785-863-2212 or csw@ksu.edu