KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

August 21, 2026

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Calendar Conflicts of Fall Brome Establishment

If rejuvenating that struggling brome stand was on your fall to-do list, it's time to get started. While there isn't a 'recipe' for rejuvenation, there are best management practices, and some of those might make the window for action this fall seem pretty tight.

Start with an understanding of planting date. Across much of NEK, the optimum fall planting window for brome is from now through September 20th. That's not to say we can't extend beyond that (note: other forages could have completely different establishment windows…), but the recommended dates are in place to help us optimize chances for establishment success. Until that new plant has three to four leaves, we may not have enough of a root system to provide the winterhardiness the new seedling needs to survive winter. Mid-late September seeding offers us that opportunity based on what we know are kind of 'average' end of growing season dates. If we go much later, we run the risk of not getting enough leaf area to produce the root system we need. At the very least, we may delay greenup next spring. At the worst, plants may not survive.

If weed control was a part of your post-harvest rejuvenation strategy, application timing of those products is important as well. Some products have very short, required intervals between time of application and reseeding. Others are much longer. Be sure you refer to label guidelines before reseeding to insure the herbicide won't result in potential germination issues while providing enough time for plants to get established.

I'm a big proponent of soil tests, but results aren't immediate, requiring in most cases from seven to 10 days from shipping to results. You can most definitely work towards establishment without one, but if fertility is part of the reason the stand needs rejuvenation in the first place, an accurate soil test is a great place to start. At the very least, try to get a soil test prior to any fertilizer applications even if you need to make said application prior to having results back to work from.

If you've already planned for seed, pulled a soil sample, and are aware of any potential reseeding restrictions – you're ahead of the game. If you haven't, make sure you are at least considering what it might take to give your seeding the best chance of success – even if that means a different plan altogether.

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Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Asian Longhorned Tick

Ticks can create many management challenges and seem to be on the increase. Last week we discussed an emerging bovine pathogen, Theileria orientalis, which causes Bovine Theileriosis and how it is primarily vectored by the Asian longhorned tick (Haemaphysalis longicornis). While this pest is not widely found in Kansas in large numbers, producers need to remain vigilant in watching for it.

This invasive tick species originally native to East Asian countries has been identified in more than half of the states, primarily in the eastern US. Since its initial detection in 2017 in New Jersey, it has rapidly expanded its range. A major contributor to this rapid spread is the significant movement of livestock around the country, some of which have ticks feeding on them during transport.

The Asian longhorned tick is asexual, meaning that females do not have to mate with males to reproduce. Almost all Asian longhorned ticks found are females and a single female will lay up to 3,000 eggs in her lifetime. This reproductive capability contributes to the rapid population growth and establishment in new environments. Unfed Asian longhorned ticks are light reddish tan to dark reddish with brown, dark markings. Adult females are grey green with yellowish markings and the size of a pea after feeding. Other unfed stages of the tick are very small, about the size of a sesame seed or smaller.

The life cycle of the Asian longhorned tick consists of three distinct life stages after hatching from the egg: larvae, nymphs, and adults. All three life stages must take a blood meal to molt and develop into the next stage. Larval ticks are mostly found looking for hosts in late summer into fall. Nymphs generally start to be found in the spring until early summer. From mid-summer until early fall adult ticks tend to infest livestock, which can lead to significant livestock health concerns.

Ticks can be found feeding around the ears, along the underline, including the “armpit” areas for both front and hind legs, and around the tail head. These infestations can be severe, with hundreds or even thousands of ticks present on a single animal. Heavy infestations can cause significant stress in affected animals, leading to reduced growth and decreased milk production. In extreme cases, excessive blood loss from large numbers of ticks can result in death.

Ongoing research is being conducted to increase understanding of this pest and best management practices. Current recommended management practices for reducing risk of tick and disease exposure depend on preventative measures. Typical tick treatments are effective against the Asian longhorned tick. Consult your veterinarian for recommendations regarding treatment protocols.

Monitor cattle for the presence of ticks. When possible, purchase animals from known sources and inspect any purchased animals upon arrival, especially when importing animals from infected areas. Implement a buffer between pasture and wooded areas, managing grass at shorter heights, four inches or less, near wooded areas. Spring pasture burning has also been shown to reduce tick numbers. For more information visit: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/asian-longhorned

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

It's Time to Fertilize Cool Season Grasses

If you have Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue in your yard, it's time to give them your attention. While our current heat wave feels never ending, soon our days will shorten and temperatures will lower. As it does, our aptly named cool season grasses will enter their fall growth phase, spreading new shoots and roots.

In order for these grasses to truly thrive, they will need sufficient amounts of nutrients. Our hot summer has likely depleted the nutrients in your lawn, which makes September most important time of year to fertilize your cool season lawn.

When you purchase fertilizer, you will see a series of three numbers on the bag. The first number is nitrogen, which helps your grasses develop healthy root systems and recover from the stressful summer conditions. Most lawns will require regular nitrogen applications. We recommend applying 1 to 1.5 pounds of quick-release nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. It is a good idea to repeat this process in November. If there is no rain, make sure to water in the fertilizer yourself.

The second and third number on the bag, are phosphorus (P) and potassium (K), respectively. These nutrients contribute to overall growth and stress tolerance. In established lawns, you often have sufficient quantities of P and K, so there is no need to add these nutrients unless a soil test indicates the need. You can look for fertilizers with high nitrogen, such as 30-0-0 or 29-5-4 or 27-3-3.

When fertilizing, take care to read the instructions and apply fertilizer evenly across the lawn and the rate given on the packaging. When you are done fertilizing, sweep or blow any fertilizer or granular products off of your sidewalks and hard surfaces. This prevents the fertilizer from entering our water ways and protects our water quality.

If you have questions about the fertilizer you need, would like to do a soil test, or need guidance on applying fertilizer to your yard, reach out to our office for more information.

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Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Kefir: Tangy, Tasty, and Packs a Powerful Health Punch

I am currently teaching a Stay Strong, Stay Healthy series in Seneca. These classes focus on strength training for adults age 60 and older. Along with exercise, we often discuss a variety of health topics. During one of our recent sessions, gut health came up in the conversation. We hear so much about how important gut health is to our overall well-being. A few weeks ago, I wrote an article about gut health in general. This week, I would like to highlight one of my favorite foods for supporting a healthy gut: kefir.

You will often find kefir in the dairy section of your grocery store. Kefir is a fermented milk beverage with a tangy flavor that has been enjoyed for centuries in parts of Eastern Europe and Asia. It is made by combining milk with kefir grains, which contain beneficial bacteria and yeasts. I think of kefir as a drinkable yogurt, although it typically contains a greater variety of probiotics, the healthy microorganisms that help support gut health.

Kefir can help maintain a healthy gut microbiome, which plays an important role in digestion, nutrient absorption, and overall health. A balanced gut microbiome may help reduce digestive discomfort and support healthy bowel function.

In addition to its probiotic benefits, kefir is packed with important nutrients. It provides calcium, phosphorus, protein, vitamin B12, riboflavin, magnesium, and vitamin D. These nutrients support many body functions, including maintaining strong bones, promoting energy production, and supporting overall health. A typical cup of plain, low-fat kefir contains about 9 grams of protein, making it a satisfying snack or a nutritious addition to a meal.

There are many ways to enjoy kefir. Try adding it to smoothies, pouring it over cereal, mixing it into overnight oats, or using it as a base for salad dressings. Of course, many people enjoy drinking it straight from the glass.

When purchasing kefir, take a moment to compare nutrition labels. Look for products that list active live cultures, either on the label or in the ingredient list. Keep in mind that flavored varieties often contain more carbohydrates and added sugars than plain kefir. If you are new to kefir, start with a small amount and gradually increase your intake over time as your digestive system adjusts.

Kefir is a nutritious addition to a healthy eating plan and offers many potential benefits. While no single food can meet all of your nutritional needs, kefir is a simple and delicious way to support good gut health and overall wellness.

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

No news this week.