

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

No Easy Answers

Winter is typically a good time for catching up on bookwork or attending winter meetings. If you're still making decisions about what to do with fall armyworm injury from last summer, it's also a good time to take another look at affected fields.

A good first step if you haven't already is a damage assessment. Without snow on the ground, you'll likely still be able to make out where the worst feeding occurred and, in some cases, whether there might be much grass left. Even in the worst areas it's possible plants will respond in spring, but with the extended growing season we had last fall, many stands had a chance to recover and are likely already showing thin areas fairly well. You may even be able to feel differences as you walk/drive across them, giving you an idea of the areas that will at the very least be thinner and likely less productive this season.

Recovery OR reseeding will both benefit from a good fertility program. If you don't have a recent soil test, take one now. We focus on nitrogen to push production, but stand maintenance from adequate pH, phosphorous, and potassium levels is also important.

If the stand is going to be left as is, the assessment should include an evaluation of weed pressure. Thin stands will likely see increased weed pressure warranting herbicide applications where they might not have before. If grass overseeding/legume interseeding is being considered, herbicide restrictions may exist. Always read and follow product labels.

If the stand is going to be converted to another crop (row crop, summer annual forage, oats, etc...), herbicide and fertility issues will still be important with a need to look ahead as well. Management may be different for seeding back to brome versus seeding to a different forage, versus a departure from forage production altogether. It can quickly become a complex discussion but can help guide current decisions as well.

There are no easy answers, but if you haven't already, it's time to start at least exploring the options. Drop me a line if we can be of assistance. You can also check out video from last fall's Brome Recovery meetings at <https://www.youtube.com/@meadowlarkextensiondistrict> for a deeper dive into what to consider as you do so.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Parturition Pending

Driving the countryside at this time of year, you start to notice the next generation of life springing as newborn baby calves can be seen paired with mothers in calving pastures or pens. It is an annual amazement to me to watch the process of bringing the next calf crop into this world. Generally speaking, cows are better left alone for the process of parturition, but there are certainly times when assistance is needed, particularly referencing heifers. Knowing the signs of impending calving can help with the decision-making process of stepping in to help or not.

As calving season approaches, cows will show typical signs that will indicate parturition is forthcoming. Indications that gestation is reaching an endpoint will develop subtly but are consistent markers that calving time is approaching. The main signs are seen in udder development, sometimes referred to as “making a bag” and the relaxation and swelling of the vulva or “springing.” Cows will often look like they are carrying calves with bolder spring of rib and a fuller appearing body capacity. This isn’t necessarily only attributable to pregnancy but is another sign to determine if the cow has a growing fetus on board.

There are many differences between individuals in the development of these signs with age being a factor. First calf heifers, especially those with higher milk production potential, develop udders longer, sometimes for two or three months before parturition. The timing of springing can be highly variable among individuals as well.

Typically, in the immediate two weeks preceding calving, springing becomes more evident, the udder fills, and one of the things that might be observed is the loss of the cervical plug. This is a very thick tenacious, mucous material hanging from the vulva. It may be seen pooling behind the cow when she is lying down. Some people mistakenly think this happens immediately before calving, but in fact this can be seen weeks before parturition and therefore is only another sign that the calving season is here.

Within 24 hours of calving, more immediate signs that usually occur are relaxation of the pelvic ligaments and strutting of the teats. While these are notable signs for the experienced manager, these could be missed by a more casual or unexperienced observer. The relaxation of the pelvic ligaments can’t be observed in fat cows, but it can be seen very clearly in thin or moderate body condition cows and can be a clue of parturition within the next 12 - 24 hours. These changes are signs the herd manager can use to more closely determine calving timing. Strutting of teats can be highly variable as well, with some cows strutting for days and others calving without this indicator. Another thing that might be seen in the immediate 12 hours before calving would be variable cow behavior. These are things such as a cow that does not come up to eat, or that isolates herself into a particular corner of the pasture. However, most cows have few behavioral changes until the parturition process starts.

If the cowherd manager knows the signs of impending parturition, focus can be given to the cows most likely to need assistance. The more cows are allowed to be undisturbed, the easier it will be to pick up on these calving clues. As stated earlier, most calves are born without issue but always be prepared to intervene when problems arise. Oklahoma State University has an excellent publication called [Calving Time Management for Beef Cows and Heifers E-1006](#) that served as a reference for this article and contains a wealth of calving information for those wanting to learn more.

February 6, 2026

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

No news article this week

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Arthritis in Kansas: Walking Toward Better Health

Arthritis is a common condition in Kansas. According to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, one in four Kansas adults—approximately 595,000 people—have been diagnosed with arthritis. Chances are, you know someone who lives with this condition. In my own family, several people have struggled with arthritis, including both of my parents.

Arthritis can significantly impact quality of life, making everyday activities more challenging and sometimes preventing people from doing the things they enjoy. Understanding arthritis and learning how to manage it can make a meaningful difference.

So, what exactly is arthritis? The word *arthritis* means inflammation of the joints, but it is actually a broad term that includes more than 100 different medical conditions. Arthritis-related conditions can cause pain, stiffness, swelling, and decreased movement in and around the joints. Some of the most common types include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and fibromyalgia.

In the past, people with arthritis were often advised to rest their joints. Today, research shows that regular physical activity can actually help reduce pain and improve joint function. One of the easiest and most accessible forms of exercise is walking. Walking is a simple activity that nearly anyone can do, and it doesn't require special equipment or gym membership.

Walking helps reduce pain and discomfort, improves balance, strengthens muscles, and helps lubricate the joints. It also places less stress on the body than many other forms of exercise. Even for those who have been less active, walking is an excellent way to begin an exercise routine and improve overall health.

If you're unsure how to get started—or if you'd like some great company along the way—K-State Research and Extension's Meadowlark District will be hosting the Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease series in Seneca beginning in March. The Walk With Ease program is specifically designed for people with arthritis and teaches participants how to safely and comfortably stay active.

The program covers the basics of arthritis, the relationship between exercise and pain, and strategies for walking safely. Participants will develop a personalized walking plan with realistic goals, making it a great option even if you haven't exercised in a while.

The Walk With Ease series will begin on March 12, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. at the Nemaha County Community Building, located at 1500 Community Drive in Seneca. The group will meet twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for six weeks. Each participant will receive an *Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease* book.

There is no cost to participate, but registration is required.

To register contact K-State Extension-Meadowlark District at 785-336-2184 or online at https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3xVg5fQFioiggDs or use the QR code:



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Cindy Williams
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May send later.