

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

What Does the Label Say?

While the growing season is spent looking at the various practices or products we tried over the last year, winter is often when we pause long enough to evaluate them. As you do, I would offer one (admittedly broad...) encouragement: read the label.

If your last trek across an armyworm damaged brome stand has you evaluating reseeding or weed control or both, knowing what's on the seed label (germination percentage) and herbicide label (planting restrictions) will be an important part of how the stand performs moving forward. Doing everything right on the seeding side can be quickly negated by applying a herbicide detrimental to seed establishment. Make sure you understand herbicide label requirements – or visit with someone who does – as you formulate a plan. For brome reseeding, this article is a good first reference: <https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/article/herbicides-for-cool-season-hayfields-and-pastures-damaged-by-fall-armyworms-661-3> .

Maybe you're evaluating products you tried on your own farm or that you've heard/read about. Product labels can be confusing – if you can find them at all. Not all products are regulated similarly. Some require stringent labeling and others no label at all meaning consistency isn't always guaranteed and products might be difficult to compare. If evaluating claims, read the label closely. I heard a claim this winter about a product *replacing* a standard seed treatment when it actually included a standard seed treatment *in* it. Why is that important? For starters, there may be less need for additional seed treatment if it's already included. Second, when evaluating performance, it's good to know what might be helping carry the load.

New crop protection product? Not only might active ingredients change but application requirements might as well. If the active ingredient is one with known resistance issues, having it in the product might be less important. Further, as crop protection products (herbicides, fungicides, insecticides...) come due for reregistration, labels are changing to meet requirements originating from enforcement of the Endangered Species Act. They may not mean *huge* changes for you but could at the very least mean changes to recordkeeping requirements.

Need help finding a label or taking a second look? Your retailer will often have label information at their fingertips and there are websites with searchable product labels available as well, not to mention references like the *2026 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide*. I'm always happy to take a second look at them as well.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Recordkeeping Considerations

Starting a news column with the word “recordkeeping” might mean sure death to desire for anyone to read on, as many people don’t enjoy the records side of livestock production. It is however the beginning of many producers' favorite time of the year - calving season, and a good time to think about records. I'll openly recognize that not everyone enjoys data, spreadsheets and recordkeeping as much as I do, but as the old saying goes “you can’t manage what you don’t measure”.

This time of the year when Extension Offices get the request for IRM “Redbooks,” but is there a better way to keep records instead of a pocket calving book? There are various software packages available with different formats, functions and availability. These come in a variety of price ranges, some even offered free. While a physical book to keep records is convenient and useful there are benefits to digitizing records. One of the big advantages is to examine and evaluate observed trends and better understand changing aspects of the herd, side by side, over time.

It is not bad practice to use physical records that are recorded in the field and then enter the data into a computer later. This allows there to be two locations where this data is stored and can serve as a backup if something were to happen to the book or the software. Mobile device software platforms and apps are becoming more commonplace, utilized as the sole recordkeeping tool. One such app offered by Kansas State University is called CalfDex. CalfDex is a free cross-platform mobile app designed for easy individual animal data collection and recording in the field. Data are uploaded to the web and made available in easy-to-use formats by the producer/rancher. <https://calfdexapi.azurewebsites.net/>

There are several benefits to keeping records digitally. The first of which is tracking records year-over-year and identifying if management actions align with observed data points. Access to data for those with log-in capabilities is a second benefit, eliminating the need to find the sole calving book and reading the information within. The third major benefit is that calving books can easily be lost, often buried on the dash of pickups and have a way of disappearing or becoming illegible.

A major consideration when looking at software is the cost and usability. The cost structure is typically a straightforward answer with some fixed and/or variable cost. The variable cost is most often associated with herd size. Many companies offer free demonstrations of their product, which might be a good option to consider before purchasing software. Don’t forget about tools available through breed associations and other organizations that might be offered to those with membership as well.

There are differences between programs in ease of use. Just because two programs have similar specifications does not mean equal satisfaction. Everyone has personal preferences, choose a program that aligns with those preferences. Ask yourself; does the program have clear, consistent screens? Is it easy to enter data? Is editing data and correcting mistakes easy and logical? What do help features look like and when are they available? Does the program outline make sense? A program that does not make sense to the user can be extremely frustrating to use and may lead to lack of implementation.

The big question with applying any technology on an operation is “does this make sense on my operation?” It is important to remember that, while you may use software, that doesn’t mean it should be the only format for keeping this data. There should also be considerations on cybersecurity protocols to keep this data private. Furthermore, this technology depends upon the user learning how to use it and committing to keeping records in a digital format.

If after reading this digital recordkeeping still doesn’t seem to be a fit, contact your local Extension office to request a “Redbook” or [K-State Cow/Calf Record Book MF185](#) which is also available via the KSRE online bookstore. May your calves all be born without assistance and data recorded to remember that they were!

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

What does a winter storm mean for your trees?

These past few months have hardly felt like winter, but now we are seeing some cold temperatures mixed with snow and wind. While this can be an inconvenience for us, it can be a stress test for our trees.

When trees go into dormancy, they become cold hardy. They undergo various physiological changes that prevent low temperatures from causing damage. The trees slow down their growth, and develop winter buds on their twigs, which are a hard-shell coating that protects living tissue underneath from the cold. The tree also allows water to exit its tissue cells, so that cells do not freeze and rupture. This is what causes the sap in trees to become thick and sugary during the winter – which is why we harvest maple syrup in the winter!

This does not mean, however, that trees are immune to cold weather all the time. These protections from the cold are only present when the tree is dormant. Trees base their dormancy on both weather and daylight. When we have periods of nice weather, trees may become less cold hardy. If freezing temperatures quickly develop after bouts of warm temperatures, that is when we see winter damage to our trees.

It can be hard to tell if your tree has suffered any damage until it starts to leaf out in the spring and you notice dieback on some branches or cracks in the bark. Unfortunately, on mature trees, there is nothing you can do to prevent this or fix the damage. On young trees with thin bark, wrapping the trunk with a light-colored plastic can help prevent sun scald that is associated with sudden movements between hot and cold temperatures. If you notice any damage, come spring, the best course of action is to prune out any damaged limbs to prevent them from falling on their own – which will leave a bigger wound than a controlled cut with a saw.

This does not mean you should panic. The vast majority of our trees will survive these winter storms. Some weaker, smaller trees may not make it through the winter, but most trees will simply have some branches die back if they are affected at all. If you have questions or concerns about your tree, please reach out to our office for more information.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Get Ready to “Go Red” for Women’s Heart Health Month

A couple of weeks ago, I attended a class from the American Heart Association to renew my CPR and First Aid certification—something I do every two years. One important thing I learned during this training is that women are less likely to receive CPR from a bystander. Thankfully, I have never needed to use these skills in a real emergency, but it is reassuring to know that if a life-threatening situation arises, I am prepared to help save a life.

February is Women’s Heart Health month. The American Heart Association promotes women’s heart health through the “Go Red for Women” campaign. On February 6, you are encouraged to wear red and raise awareness by turning your social networks red. Share photos, post stories, and talk about how cardiovascular disease has impacted you or someone you know. Invite your friends to join in and help spread the message. According to the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women nationwide, affecting 45% of women over age 20. Rural women are not exempt and often face unique challenges—including distance from hospitals, limited access to specialists, and caregiving responsibilities—that can make prevention and treatment more difficult.

Know the Signs of a Heart Attack

- **Chest discomfort:** Pain, pressure, squeezing, fullness, or discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the body:** Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, shoulder, or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath, cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.**

Women often delay seeking care, sometimes dismissing symptoms or attributing them to less serious causes. Many people hesitate because they “don’t want to bother the doctor,” “don’t want to scare their spouse,” or fear feeling embarrassed if it turns out not to be a heart attack. But **time is critical**. If someone is suspected of having a heart attack, act quickly and call 911.

You *can* save a life. The American Heart Association encourages community members to learn hands-only CPR, which does not require medical training. And don’t forget to “know your numbers”: talk to your doctor about your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose.

Join us on February 6th and “Wear Red for Women.” For more information on heart disease, visit www.heart.org.

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

No news article this week.