

June 19, 2026

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Staying Ahead of Tar Spot

The confirmation of Tar Spot in NE Kansas late last week is a not-so-subtle reminder of the importance of scouting. Levels were still low but just finding it should encourage vigilance as the season progresses. How important is it to stay ahead of Tar Spot? Consider this statement from Purdue Extension Plant Pathologist Dr. Darcy Telenko: 'Early detection is critical. Once disease severity reaches five (5) percent or greater in the upper canopy, fungicides are unlikely to effectively slow disease progression.' What does that mean? Stay on top of it and have a plan you can implement should you confirm the disease.

Learn about the confirmation and next steps in the *KSU Agronomy eUpdate*:
<https://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/eupdates/2026/issue-1108-june-18/first-tar-spot-2026.html> or contact me for details. K-State Extension Row Crops Pathologist Dr. Rodrigo Onofre will be part of a disease 'scouting tour' of the Meadowlark Extension District on Tuesday June 30th with Tar Spot on the agenda. Get tour details including where to receive reports from the tour in our Agronomy blog: <https://blogs.k-state.edu/meadowlarkagronomy/>.

Corn Disease 'Did You Know'?

Not all corn diseases are the same, and it can be tough to know what's coming next. For a 'rough guide', consider these temperature/moisture factors for our most common diseases;

Gray Leaf Spot: favored by rainy and/or humid weather

Southern Rust: favored by warm days and nights (above 80 degrees) and high humidity

Tar spot: temperatures of 60 to 75, 75 percent plus humidity, and wet leaves for seven hours or more

June 19, 2026

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Planned Hay Purchase

Sitting in a grazing management workshop yesterday, participants were again encouraged to consider the stored forage part of the operation and work to extend the grazing season. I don't disagree with any of those sentiments and completely agree that the ruminant can harvest, process, and distribute the manure from forage better than any diesel-powered equipment, but the reality for most operations is that some amount of stored forage is needed.

A relatively dry fall, winter and early spring, following heavy fall armyworm damage in places last year, has created the situation where most folks are likely finding fewer bales of hay in the field as they get done baling. Checking current hay inventories, prices, and forage quality can mitigate potential feeding challenges during the colder months.

Feed inputs often make up the largest portion of a livestock producer's costs. Be aware of a few principles in purchasing hay to make the most out of this investment. Determine whether you are paying on a per ton or per bale basis. The [Kansas Direct Hay Report](#) most often reports on a per ton basis but know how hay is priced before you buy. Knowing the hay quality will help in spending feed dollars more effectively. Buy bales that are tightly rolled, dense, and have square shoulders that don't sag. Bales should be free of mold, weed seeds and dangerous levels of nitrates. Net wrap can be loved or hated but does help bales shed water.

The class of animals and their nutritional/body condition help to determine consumption demand and the quality of hay needed. If possible, buy forage that will best match those requirements. Don't forget though that hay can be supplemented with additional protein and energy sources to meet requirements if higher quality hay is hard to source or lower quality hay can be reasonably purchased.

Use a lab analysis to determine forage quality. Core sample 15-20 bales from each lot and send the samples to a lab for testing. These tests can calculate moisture content, crude protein (CP), relative feed Value (RFV), relative forage quality (RFQ), and additional information including mineral content and nitrate levels. The K-State publication [MF3177 Forage Sampling Procedures and Equipment](#) gives more information on taking a quality, representative sample of various stored forages. Visit with your local Extension Agent to help determine the best test for your situation.

After hay is sourced and purchased; storing and feeding to minimize waste should be the goal. If hay is not stored inside, locate hay bale yards in an elevated, well-drained area out in the open with easy access in the winter for feeding. Rows should line up north to south, at least 3 ft apart, so sunlight will reach a greater portion of the bale. This will help evaporate moisture from the bales and the ground around them quickly.

If possible, weigh bales to get accurate weights when planning winter feeding delivery. Feeding only what your livestock needs in a 24-hour period helps reduce waste. Utilizing feeders will help reduce waste as well. If feeding hay that may contain noxious/invasive weeds or non-native forage species, feed in a designated area, so if a problem does develop, it can be kept isolated and, hopefully, controlled. Not bringing in these problems in harvested forage is a better plan.

June 19, 2026

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

De-Thatch Your Warm Season Lawn

If you have a warm-season turf grass, like bermudagrass or zoysiagrass, now is the time to think about dethatching. Thatch refers to the layer of dead grass and roots that build up between your living grass and the soil.

Normally, thatch is not a problem. In fact, a healthy layer of thatch less than ½ inch thick can provide insulation from temperature fluctuations and help conserve soil moisture. But when thatch gets more than ½ inch thick, it can cause serious issues for your lawn. Thick thatch can harbor pests and diseases that attack your turf, and it can lead to poor root growth for your grass.

So, when the thatch in your lawn gets thick, it's time to dethatch. Because these operations thin the lawn, they should be performed when the lawn is in the best position to recover. For warm season grasses that time is June through July. Buffalograss, our other common warm-season grass, normally does not need to be dethatched.

Thatch is best kept in check by power-raking and/or core-aerating. If thatch is more than ¾ inch thick, the lawn should be power raked. Set the blades just deep enough to pull out the thatch. The lawn can be severely damaged by power-raking too deeply. In some cases, it may be easier to use a sod cutter to remove the existing sod.

Bermudagrass will often come back if rhizomes remain in the soil. If not, you will need to start over with seed sprigs or plugs. If thatch is between one-half and a ¾- inch, thick, core-aeration is a better choice. The soil-moisture level is important to do a good job of core-aerating. It should be neither too wet nor too dry, and the soil should crumble fairly easily when worked between your fingers. Go over the lawn enough times so that the aeration holes are about 2 inches apart.

Excessive thatch accumulation can be prevented by not over-fertilizing with nitrogen. Frequent, light watering also encourages thatch. Water only when needed and attempt to wet the entire root zone of the turf with each irrigation. Finally, where thatch is excessive, control should be viewed as a long-term, integrated process (i.e., to include proper mowing, watering, and fertilizing) rather than a one-shot cure. One power-raking or core-aeration will seldom solve the problem.

June 19, 2026

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

The Health Impact of Loneliness in Rural Kansas

Loneliness goes beyond simply being alone. It is the distress or discomfort people feel when they perceive a lack of meaningful social connections. Among older adults, loneliness is increasingly common, with about one-third of individuals ages 50 to 80 reporting feelings of isolation. Rates are even higher among those experiencing physical or mental health challenges.

While rural communities are often known for strong traditions and close-knit relationships, there is growing evidence that social isolation is increasing among rural residents. This trend can have a much greater impact on health than many people realize.

The health effects of loneliness are significant. Individuals who experience loneliness are at greater risk for chronic conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, stroke, and even premature death. Loneliness has also been linked to faster cognitive decline.

The good news is that staying socially connected can improve both physical and mental health. There are practical ways to reduce loneliness and strengthen connections:

Strengthen Community Connections

Look for opportunities to get involved in your community. Check local newspapers and social media pages for events. Consider joining an exercise group, taking an educational class, or sharing a meal at a congregate meal site.

Volunteer

Building connections with others is key to overall well-being. Volunteering not only helps you form meaningful relationships but also allows you to make a positive impact. According to the Mayo Clinic, volunteering keeps you physically and mentally active, which can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, lower stress, and provide a sense of purpose. It can also boost self-esteem—and help you make new friends.

Encourage Social Participation

Engaging in activities you enjoy can make a big difference. Attend a religious service, join a hobby group such as a quilting guild, or share your skills by mentoring youth in sewing, woodworking, knitting, or crocheting. Community events, like your local county fair, are also great opportunities to connect with others.

Use Technology to Stay Connected

While video calls are not a substitute for in-person interaction, they can help bridge the gap—especially when distance is a barrier. A simple video call with family or friends can lift your spirits and help maintain meaningful connections.

June 19, 2026

Addressing loneliness is something we can all take part in. Strong social connections are vital for healthier individuals and stronger communities. Take a moment this weekend to check in on someone who lives alone or may be facing health challenges. A phone call or visit can make a meaningful difference.

Let's work together to stay connected and support one another.

June 19, 2026

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

New Elderberry Jelly Recipe

Up until this time, it was not recommended to can elderberry jelly. Thanks to Newell Brands, who produce Ball and Kerr canning products, for their extensive work in developing a new Elderberry Jelly. In the latest Ball Blue Book, 38th edition, they removed all recipes containing elderberries. This is because many elderberries are a low acid fruit, with a pH content above 4.6. Then they conducted research to create a properly acidified elderberry jelly recipe.

They strongly recommend weighing the ingredients for accuracy and safety. Do not make any changes to the ingredients or amounts used for this recipe.

Is it Safe to Can Leftovers or Already Canned Foods?

Often people think that they can save money by buying larger containers of canned food, transferring the contents (or leftovers from the first use) to smaller jars and re-processing it. Others wonder if this is a way to save leftovers from any size can, or from a family meal, for a longer time than they will keep in the refrigerator.

According to the National Center for Home Food Preservation, there are several problems with these practices:

- There are no safe tested processes to do this. In some cases, the way the heat is distributed throughout the jar during canning will be very different if you start with already canned/cooked food than with fresh. Excessively softened foods will pack more tightly into a jar or arrange themselves differently and the process time recommended for fresh foods will not be enough for the already canned foods. Under processing can lead to foodborne illness or at the very least, spoilage and loss of product. You could not just transfer the food and "seal" the jar. You would need some heat treatment known to destroy any organisms transferred with the food.
- The expense and time of re-canning foods far exceed the cost savings of bulk or large-quantity packaged foods. To re-can food, you know add the expense of a jar and lid as well as the energy to re-can the food.
- Most likely the quality of the food will be greatly reduced by canning the food for a second time. The heat of canning does cause loss of some nutrients, and a second round of canning will further reduce the nutritional value. Textural changes from heating will be added to those already produced. Leftovers may have been temperature abused which adds more risk.

Without tested processes for re-canning foods, there is no way to know how to adjust the canning process and the default (although not a recommendation) is a process for the full time and temperature as if starting from scratch. When you consider you are not even saving money and resources, it does not seem worth the loss of food quality to practice this re-canning of commercially canned food.

June 19, 2026

Bottom line is don't do this. The best, and safest choice, is to freeze leftovers for later use.