KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

June 5, 2026

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Online Fall Armyworm Trapping Network

Surprises *can* be a good thing (gifts, parties, etc…), but they're less than desirable when they come at the expense of a crop we're trying to grow. It's why weather networks like the Kansas Mesonet or organizations like the Crop Protection Network have developed tools to help monitor everything from accumulating growing degree days for overwintering pests like alfalfa weevil to maps showing the annual distribution and movement of Southern Rust. It's also a driving force behind the newly established fall armyworm online moth reporting network.

Fall armyworm is a migratory pest that flies in from the south each year. Since they don't follow a calendar, we use pheromone traps to give an idea of when moths arrive. Doing so gives us a 'heads up' it's time to start scouting. As this trapping network has grown, so has the need for a formalized reporting network.

Housed on the *Great Lakes and Maritime Pest Monitoring Network*, this tool allows growers to see trap locations and trapping numbers. It is *not* a substitute for regular scouting – feeding pressure/injury can vary significantly in a short distance – but it *can* provide information to direct scouting efforts. Longer term, it will also help us to gain a better idea of this pest's seasonality and general distribution within the state.

Check out (and bookmark…) the site by visiting our *Tailgate Talks* resource page at https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/tailgate-talks/ . There you'll find a link to the monitoring network which includes step by step instructions on how to use it. Feel free to drop me a line as well if you want help accessing the information.

With any luck, fall armyworm will find somewhere else to hang out this summer and will be a non-issue. I'll regularly share information here as well, but if you want to track their movement across the state, check out the trapping network at the link above.

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Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Kansas Response Plan for New World Screwworm

There are times when I search for inspiration on what to share with readers each week in this space. Unfortunately, recent news in Texas leaves no room for doubt as to what to write. New World Screwworm has been a topic of discussion for some time now and after a confirmed case the US in bovine, I'm choosing to use this space to share the Kansas Department of Agriculture press release and resources today.

On June 3, 2026, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service confirmed the detection of a New World screwworm (NWS) in a 3-week-old calf in Zavala County, Texas. There has not been a confirmed case in Kansas at this time, and the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Health is actively working in alignment with the USDA's established strategies to respond to a confirmation of NWS in the U.S., including restrictions on animal movement from the infested zone.

NWS is an invasive pest that affects livestock, pets, wildlife, and less commonly, people and birds. NWS larvae (maggots) burrow into open wounds of warm-blooded animals, which can be deadly if left untreated. NWS is not a contagious disease that spreads from animal to animal but is the infestation of a parasitic fly. NWS poses a direct economic threat to the livestock industry, but it is important to note that this does not impact food safety.

KDA continues to update veterinarians and livestock producers about the current status of NWS in the U.S. and encourages all owners of livestock and pets who may be traveling to Texas or other regions near Mexico to be vigilant about the condition of their animals. Livestock and pet owners should also be aware that additional travel requirements due to NWS may be in place when traveling with animals within or around the infested zone.

"While this new confirmed case in Texas is a serious concern, we have been preparing for this scenario for over a year, and we have confidence in the response plan that is in place," said Dr. Justin Smith, Kansas Animal Health Commissioner. "We appreciate the awareness across the state and the help of livestock owners, veterinarians, pet owners, and other stakeholders who are important partners in preventing NWS in Kansas."

NWS is a treatable condition, so early identification is critical to the health of the infested animals, which is why monitoring and reporting play a key role in managing this threat. Kansas State University has an excellent publication by Dr. Cassandra Olds entitled "New World Screwworms Fact Sheet for Producers" that provides more specific information on this pest.

For more information about travel requirements, clinical signs of NWS, or other information, go to KDA's New World screwworm web page at agriculture.ks.gov/NWS or the USDA page at screwworm.gov. If you suspect an NWS case, contact your local veterinarian or the KDA Division of Animal Health at 785-564-6601. NWS is a reportable condition and should be reported to the Division of Animal Health.

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Get Ready to Spray for Bagworms

This week I have seen bagworms emerging in Northeast Kansas. If you had problems with bagworms in recent years, this means you should start spraying in about a week.

Bagworms (thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis) are insects native to North America that can cause damage to our trees when they are in their larval form. These insects feed on plant tissue, usually conifers – especially eastern redcedars. As they feed, they also use the plant tissue to create a bag that they carry around on their backs with only the head and thorax sticking out of the bag. This is how they get the name bagworms.

When they mature, the males transition into a moth and leave their bags to search for a female. The female does not leave her bag, as female bagworms do not have any wings. After a male bagworm mates with a female, the female lays eggs inside the bag. These eggs stay in the bag over winter then emerge sometime in the spring, usually late May to mid-June depending on our weather. When the bagworms emerge from their eggs, they create a thin strand of silk to use as a parachute and let the wind carry them to trees. Generally, the females stay at the top of the trees and males are closer to the bottom. This is why you may notice more bags near the tops of your trees.

Bagworms are not necessarily a death sentence for your plants, especially if there is not a heavy infestation. However, conifers, a bagworms preferred host, are slower to regenerate plant tissue compared to deciduous trees. Heavy infestation for several consecutive years can kill well-established plants and shrubs.

For small infestations, you can pick the bags off the trees in August or later. You can kill the bags by letting them soak in soapy water. Simply pulling them off the tree and throwing them in the grass or a compost pile will not kill them and the eggs may still hatch.

For larger trees or big plantings, picking bags off is not always feasible. In this case you can spray insecticides for bagworms. Apply insecticides in the morning or evenings when the bagworm larvae are most active. The common insecticides used for bagworms are stomach poisons, meaning the bagworm larvae must eat the insecticide to die. Once larvae reach about 1 to 2 inches long, they have significantly reduced their feeding and spraying is ineffective. Therefore, spraying in late July or later will have no impact on the bagworms.

Bagworms do not all emerge from their eggs at the same time. After you notice, they have started emerging, wait a few weeks to allow for more to emerge then begin spraying. If the bagworms have not emerged, spraying them will not kill them. After the first spraying, you may consider waiting another week or two and spraying again to kill any larvae that are late hatching from their eggs.

Insecticides commonly used for controlling bagworms include (but is not limited to) spinosad, acephate, cyfluthrin, Malathion, and permethrin. Products containing Bacillus thuringiensis are effective when used against bagworm larvae while they are still small. Be sure to read the label of a product to check that it is rated for bagworms before use and follow application instructions on the bottle. If you have any questions, you can reach out to me or search online for our K-State extension publication, “Bagworm, Insect Pest of Trees and Shrubs.”

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Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Phone Scams: Staying One Step Ahead

Recently, I have received questions about how to stop repeated and unwanted calls to a person's cell phone. These constant calls are often scams, and older adults are frequently targeted because scammers view them as potential victims. Callers may present themselves as representatives of government agencies such as Medicare or Social Security. Caller ID may even appear to show a legitimate U.S. government number, making these calls seem trustworthy.

Phone scams use specific tactics designed to catch people off guard. Being aware of these techniques can help you recognize a scam before it causes harm.

Common Scam Tactics to Watch For

Urgency: Scammers often pressure you to act quickly. They may say you will miss an important enrollment opportunity, such as Medicare coverage, or claim a loved one is in trouble and needs immediate help. These situations are designed to trigger an emotional response. If this happens, pause and take a step back. Scammers rely on quick decisions before you have time to think.

Authority: Many people were raised to respect authority figures, which scammers exploit. They may claim to represent a government agency, financial institution, or other trusted organization to gain your confidence. Remember, legitimate organizations will not pressure you into making immediate decisions over the phone.

Fear or Emotion: Scammers often create panic, confusion, or distress to get you to share sensitive information. Take a breath and carefully consider what is being asked before responding.

Secrecy: Some scams involve asking you to keep the situation private. For example, in a "grandparent scam," a caller may pretend to be a relative in trouble and ask you not to tell anyone. Do not keep these situations to yourself—reach out to a trusted family member or friend. Using a family "code word" for emergencies can also help verify real situations.

Steps You Can Take to Protect Yourself

There are several simple steps you can take to reduce your risk of becoming a victim:

- **Don't answer unknown numbers.** Let calls go to voicemail. Even if the number looks familiar, it could be "spoofed" to appear legitimate.
- **Hang up immediately.** If you answer and the call seems suspicious, do not engage—simply hang up.
- **Be cautious of voice recording.** With advances in AI technology, even brief responses can potentially be misused.
- **Never share personal information.** Do not provide Social Security numbers, Medicare numbers, bank account details, or credit card information over the phone.
- **Verify the caller.** If a caller claims to represent your bank or another organization, hang up and contact the organization using a phone number you trust.
- **Slow down.** Talk through any request with someone you trust. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

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Reporting Scams and Getting Help

Phone scams can happen to anyone. While older adults are often targeted, awareness and action can make a difference.

If you receive a scam call or believe you have been targeted:

- Report scams to the Federal Trade Commission at https://reportfraud.ftc.gov
- Contact your **local law enforcement** if you have lost money or feel threatened
- Report Medicare-related scams to the **Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)** at **1-877-808-2468**

You can also contact **K-State Extension – Meadowlark District** at **785-364-4125** for information and resources.

Scammers are becoming increasingly sophisticated, but their success often depends on catching people off guard. The best defense is to slow down, verify information, and talk with someone you trust before taking action.

If something feels off, trust your instincts—hang up and check it out.

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

Preparing Food When the Power Goes Out

Warmer weather and storms are a part of our weather right now. If you lose power, handling food can be tricky. If you don't have a generator, then consider these options to prepare food without power.

Keep a food thermometer handy. Remember these three temperatures when cooking meats; 145° for steaks, roasts, chops; 160° for ground meats; and 165° for all poultry. If you have limited fuel for cooking, choose quick-cooking foods to reserve fuel.

Prepare one meal at a time so there are no leftovers. Don't leave food sitting at room temperature or in a warm environment for more than two hours as this can lead to bacterial growth.

There are options to cook food. A fireplace is handy, but do not use charcoal in a fireplace as it can emit carbon monoxide. Get outdoors and use a camp stove, charcoal grill, or gas grill.

Stock up on foods that do not require any cooking or refrigeration. Examples include peanut butter, canned meats, whole grain chips or crackers, fresh fruit, canned fruit, dried fruit, and many others. Don't forget your pets. They also need nourishment in an emergency.

Handwashing is still important! Use bottled water and soap if running water is not available. Use disposable utensils and plates for easy clean up. Heat water on the outdoor grill to wash other items.