**D’s Notes**

As we continue to plant wheat, and harvest the fall crops, let us not forget about the livestock. Side of our operations. Also, some tips on putting final touches on our gardening and other outdoor projects.

**Cattle Trace Project**

On November 13 at 6:00 PM, the collaborators of the CattleTrace Pilot Project for animal disease traceability and K-State Research and Extension will be hosting an information session at Winter Livestock (1414 East Trail) in Dodge City, KS, with details of how cow-calf producers can get involved.

To learn more, please join CattleTrace and KSRE on November 13 for a free dinner and a brief informational session, or go to www.cattletrace.org. Please RSVP for a meal count by November 9 to Andrea Burns with KSRE at aburns@ksu.edu or call 620-227-4542.

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**WHAT PRODUCERS SHOULD BE THINKING ABOUT IN DECEMBER……**

**BEEF --** *Tips by Dale Blasi, Extension Beef Specialist*

***Cow herd management for spring-calving cows***

 In late fall and early winter, start feeding supplement to mature cows using these guidelines:

• Dry grass — 1-2 pounds (lb.) per day of a 40% crude protein (CP) supplement

• Dry grass — 3-4 lb. per day of a 20% CP supplement

• Dry grass — 10 lb. good nonlegume hay, no supplement needed

 Compare supplements based on cost per pound of nutrient.

 Utilize crop residues.

 Strip-graze or rotate cattle to improve grazing efficiency.

 Cows in average body condition can be grazed at 1-2 acres per cow for 30 days, assuming

normal weather. Available forage is directly related to grain production levels.

 Limiting nutrients are usually rumen degradable protein, trace minerals and vitamin A.

 Control lice.

***General management***

 Document your cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA)

 programs.

 Review management decisions; lower your costs per unit of production.

 Check your financial management plan and make appropriate adjustments before the end of the

year.

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### Tally Time – Troubleshooting Poor Pregnancy Rates

By [*Sandy Johnson*](http://www.asi.k-state.edu/about/people/faculty/johnson/), extension beef specialist, Colby, KS

From time to time, you hear through the grapevine that someone’s herd had an unusually high number of open cows at fall preg check time.  That is when you wipe your brow and say “glad that didn’t happen to my herd”!   In some cases, the poor reproductive response is isolated to a particular pasture, bull or age/management group and the origin of the problem may be easier to find.  If not, the search for an answer will take longer and will be helped by accurate and complete records, and sometimes diagnostic testing. What follows highlights some of the starting points for troubleshooting.

Information on when cows did get pregnant during the breeding season can be very informative. This requires that pregnancy diagnosis occur early enough that pregnancies can be reasonably staged. The tools and experience of your veterinarian will determine when pregnancies are beyond a point where age can be determined accurately (generally best if longest pregnancy is under 100-120 days of age). If 60% or more of the cows are pregnant during the first three weeks of the breeding season, it is a reasonable assumption that a majority of cows were cycling at the start of the breeding season and that bulls were fertile at this point.

If detail on timing of pregnancy is not available, written records of cowherd body condition at the start of calving and breeding can inform the possible roll of nutrition on cyclicity.   If open cows have low body condition at pregnancy check, review the nutrition program, weaning time and genetic potential for milk production and their match for the environment. Bull body condition and information on bull breeding soundness exams would indicate if the bull(s) were considered potentially satisfactory breeders at the start of the season. Was the bull to cow ratio appropriate for the age of bull(s) and pasture conditions and what if any breeding activity was observed?

Unfortunately, bull fertility is not a static trait.  Think back through the breeding season about the incidence of footrot, pinkeye or evidence of neighbor’s bull(s)/cow(s) in the pasture.  A bull could be temporarily infertile due to illness or injury and fine by the time the open cows are identified.   Nevertheless, retesting bulls may be justified and screening for problems such as Trichomoniasis can occur at the same time.

A review of routine vaccinations, actual products and timing of administration to both males and females will likely be part of your veterinarian review.  If any cattle were purchased, biosecurity practices and disease testing prior to introducing them to the main herd should be considered.  Similar information from neighbors with fenceline contact may need to be explored as well.

While there can be a number of infectious causes of pregnancy loss, a few are much more likely to cause losses relatively early in gestation that would be noted at a routine pregnancy check around weaning time.  Those would include Trichomoniasis, Camplyobacteriosis, Neosporosis, and Leptospirosis.  Your veterinarian will know about the incidence of these problems in area herds and can tap into resources of the K-State Veterinary Diagnostic lab or similar as these possibilities are evaluated.

Various stressors such as a nutritional change, predators or extreme heat can cause early embryonic loss or reduced conception rates.  Because animals are adaptable and vary in their tolerance to stress, it may be very difficult to assign one of these stressors as a cause of embryonic loss with complete certainty.  While it may seem to the owner that everything is the same year to year, small annual changes such as increasing mature cow size, may show no negative impact until some other stressor comes into play to push the system past a tipping point.

Less than adequate nutrition is the most common cause of reduced pregnancy rates in cowherds.  Good records documenting cow body condition at key times (especially pre-calving), vaccination and semen testing records will help narrow the focus when attempting to find the reason for a low pregnancy rate.   It may take reviewing the list of possibilities many times before an answer becomes apparent.  Producers that identify a poor reproductive response in the fall have more options, with potentially better economic outcomes, than those that wait until calving to see what happens.  Happy preg checking.

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**Apply Late-Season Nitrogen Application in November**

November is the time to give Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue lawns the last nitrogen application of the season. Why November? Because while top growth slows in response to cool temperatures, grass plants are still making food (carbohydrates) by photosynthesis. A November nitrogen application helps boost the photosynthesis rate. Carbohydrates that are not used in growth are stored in the crown and other storage tissues in the plant. These carbohydrate reserves help the turfgrass green up earlier in the spring and sustain growth into May without the need for early-spring (March or April) nitrogen. Those early-spring nitrogen applications are less desirable because they can lead to excessive shoot growth and reduced root growth. Other benefits of November-applied nitrogen for cool-season grasses include improved winter hardiness, root growth and shoot density.

How much should you apply? One to 1 to 1 ½ pounds actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. of lawn area is sufficient. In order for this application to be effective the nitrogen must be readily available to the plant because the growing season is nearly over. Therefore, for a November application, use a soluble (quickly-available) nitrogen carrier such as urea or ammonium sulfate. Many turfgrass fertilizers sold in garden centers and other retail outlets also contain soluble nitrogen. Avoid products that contain water-insoluble nitrogen (slow-release) for this application. As always, sweep up any fertilizer that gets on driveways, sidewalks, or streets and reapply it to the lawn.

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**What to Do with Tree Leaves**

It's that time of year again. Leaves are rapidly falling from deciduous trees so it's a good time to stop and think about options for handling the litter. Although a scattering of leaves won't harm the lawn, excessive cover prevents sunlight from reaching turfgrass plants.  Turf left in this state for an extended period will be unable to make the carbohydrates needed to carry it through the winter.

There are options for dealing with the fallen leaves other than bagging them up and putting them out for the trash collector. Composting is a great way to handle the refuse. Compost can then be used in the vegetable garden and flowerbeds.

An even easier method of making good use of the leaves is direct incorporation in either vegetable gardens or annual flower beds.  Use a lawn mower with a bagging attachment to chop and collect the leaves.  Transport them to the garden or bed and apply a 2- to 3-inch layer of leaves on the surface of the soil and then till them in.  Repeat the process every couple of weeks until you run out of leaves or the weather becomes too cold or the soil becomes too wet.  With luck, you should be able to make 3 to 4 applications this fall.

Another option is to mow the leaves with a mulching mower and let shredded leaves filter into the turf canopy. (A side-discharge mower also will work, but it won't shred the leaves as thoroughly.) This method will be most effective if you do it often enough that leaf litter doesn't become too thick. Mow while you can still see grass peeking through the leaves.

You may wonder whether this practice will be detrimental to the lawn in the long run. Research at Michigan State University in which they used a mulching mower to shred up to about one pound of leaves per square yard of lawn (one pound is equal to approximately 6 inches of leaves piled on the grass) for five consecutive years, found no long-term effects of the shredded leaves on turf quality, thatch thickness, organic content of the thatch, or soil test results (pH, nutrients, etc.). If you mow leaves and have a cool-season lawn, it makes sense to be on a fall nitrogen fertilization program and core-aerate in the fall (things you should be doing anyway). If you have a warm-season lawn, you can still use this technique but wait to fertilize and core-aerate until next late May or early June.

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**Roasting Pumpkin Seeds**

    Now that Halloween will soon be past, you may be wondering what to do with the pumpkins that were used to decorate for the holiday. Consider roasting the seeds before freezing temperatures destroys the pumpkin fruit. Cut open the pumpkin and remove the seeds and stringy material. Seeds should be washed and dried and the "strings" discarded. Toss the seeds with a little oil before roasting.
    Flavor can be enhanced by adding a sprinkling of salt to the oiled seeds. Seeds can then be spread on a cookie sheet and roasted for about 25 minutes at 325 degrees F. Times may vary depending on the size and moisture content of the seed. Seeds are done when they turn a golden brown. If seeds are not eaten immediately, store in a zip closure bag in the refrigerator.

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**Natural Needle Drop on Arborvitae, Pines & Spruce**

We are starting to see very noticeable natural needle drop on some evergreens such as arborvitae, pines and spruce. This is a process where 2- to 4-year-old interior needles turn yellow, then brown, and eventually drop off. Those who aren't familiar with this process often are concerned about the health of the tree. This is a natural phenomenon that occurs every year and does not hurt the tree. However, some years it is much more noticeable than others. Be sure to check that only the older needles are affected --the needles on the tips of the branches should look fine--and that there is no spotting or banding on the needles that are turning yellow. If spotting or banding is noted, take a sample to your local county extension office for diagnosis.

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**Draining Hoses and Irrigation Lines**

Hoses and shallow irrigation lines may be damaged over the winter if water is not drained. If there is a main shut-off valve for the system, close it and then run through the zones to make sure any pressure has a chance to bleed off. Lawn irrigation systems usually have shallow lines. Though some lines may be self-draining, check to be sure there are no manual drains. If manual drains are present, they should be opened. Be sure to map them so they can be closed next spring before the system is pressurized.  If there are no manual drains the system should be blown out with an air compressor.  Lawn irrigation companies often offer this service.

Drain hoses by stretching them out and coiling them for storage. Water will drain as you pull the hose toward you for coiling. Store in a protected place. UV light can make hoses brittle over time. (Ward Upham)