WHAT BEEF PRODUCERS SHOULD BE THINKING ABOUT IN MAY......

Tips by Dale Blasi, Extension Beef Specialist

Breeding season is beginning or continuing for many operations; therefore, both females and males must be reproductively fit.

1) Several estrus synchronization procedures have been developed. To determine the correct synchronization program to use, consider the following:  
   a) age group of females (yearling replacement heifers vs. cows),  
   b) commitment of time and efforts for heat detection,  
   c) potential number of females that are anestrus (days postpartum, body condition, calving difficulty),  
   d) labor availability, and  
   e) the return on investment for total commitment to the breeding program.

2) Handle semen properly and use correct AI techniques to maximize fertility.  
3) Natural service bull should have body condition, eyes, feet, legs and reproductive parts closely monitored during the breeding season. Resolve any problems immediately.

4) All bulls should have passed a breeding soundness examination prior to turnout.

Other tips include:  
1) Begin your calf preconditioning program. Vaccination, castration and parasite control at a young age will decrease stress at weaning time. This is a time to add value to the calf crop.  
2) Implanting calves older than 60 days of age will increase weaning weight.  
3) Properly identify all cows and calves. Establish premises numbers for compliance with state and national programs.  
4) Use best management practices (BMPs) to establish sustainable grazing systems.  
5) Use good management practices when planting annual forage sources and harvesting perennial forages.  
6) Maintain records that will verify calving season, health programs, and management practices.

Cow-calf producers face a management decision on weather to implant suckling calves or not to. This short video by Dr. Sandy Johnson, KSRE NW Area Beef Specialist on Implanting suckling calves provides some information to make that decision (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pge2bOda10&feature=youtu.be).

AgManager.Info is a fantastic source for Farm Management and Farm Economic information. There are several videos on AgManager.Info concerning current conditions they include:

Economics of Agriculture During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Series)  
   Kansas Land Values-Impacts of COVID-19 (4/16/20)  
   Ongoing Effects on Livestock Markets (4/9/20)  
   Grain Markets and Planting Intentions (4/2/20)  
   Further Updates on the Macroeconomy (3/26/20)

Other Recent Videos include:  
   Beef-Cattle Sector Thoughts (4/16/20)  
   A Discussion of the Agricultural Provisions in the CARES Act (4/15/20)  
   SBA Paycheck Protection Program for Cooperatives and Farmers (4/13/20)  
   Addressing Concerns Amid COVID-19 - Follow-up for Kansas Women in Ag (4/8/20)

These videos can be found at https://agmanager.info/news/recent-videos/.
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Hodgeman County Wheat Freeze Damage

Freeze damage on Hodgeman County wheat is showing up on some fields. Damage I have found so far, include leaf tip damage and some stem damage. For more information on freeze damage to wheat, please see the publication “Spring Freeze Injury to Kansas Wheat,” K-State Research and Extension publication C646.

Producers whose wheat has suffered severe freeze damage have some difficult decisions to make. The most difficult is whether to keep the crop or to destroy it. There is no sure answer, unless it is obvious that the crop is almost completely damaged and not coming back strongly enough to produce more than a minimal yield. In most cases, there is still plenty of time before the crop has to be destroyed in order to plant grain sorghum, soybeans, or if plans are to plant wheat again this fall. But if the crop is obviously lost, it should be killed as soon as possible, keeping crop insurance considerations in mind. As long as it is still at least partially alive, the freeze-damaged crop will take up soil moisture and nutrients needed for the following crop. Producers who have forward contracted much of their anticipated production will probably want to wait longer if there is any doubt about whether the crop will recover.

If producers do plan to terminate their wheat crop, there are several possible options for managing the field, depending on circumstances. There are some basic questions to ask before deciding on what to do.

Basic questions to ask

1. Was a long-residual sulfonylurea herbicide used on the wheat crop?  
* YES. Options are limited. Producers must check the product labels for rotational restrictions. For more on these restrictions, refer to the accompanying eUpdate article in this issue, “Herbicide carryover considerations when re-cropping damaged wheat”.  
* NO. More options are available. 
  a. Cut the failed wheat for forage or graze it out, then re-crop to any row crop or plant back to wheat in the fall. 
  b. Terminate wheat with herbicides or tillage, then plant a summer crop allowed by rotation restrictions. 
  
Additional comments: The wheat should be tested for nitrate levels before cutting for forage or grazing, especially if a recent top-dress application was made ahead of the freeze. Tilling the wheat under could cause erosion problems, and may be restricted by farm program compliance requirements.

2. Is the crop insured?  
* YES. Three key points:
  -- Talk to your crop insurance agent before doing anything  
  -- It’s very important that producers get their insurance company’s consent before cutting the crop for forage, grazing it out, or killing it. The insurance company must have a chance to appraise and release the acres before the crop is destroyed. If the company cannot make an accurate appraisal, or the producer disagrees with the appraisal at the time the acreage is to be destroyed, the company and producer can work out representative strip areas to be left intact for future appraisal purposes before cutting the crop for forage, grazing it, or otherwise destroying it.  
  -- For non-irrigated acreage, especially in western Kansas, this spring’s decisions on failed wheat may have insurance implications for the 2021 wheat crop. If the failed wheat crop had been planted on acreage qualifying as summer fallow in the fall of 2019, it would qualify as summer fallow acreage for 2021 ONLY IF:
a. the failed wheat was terminated by JUNE 1, AND
b. any later growth controlled by mechanical or chemical means, AND
c. you did not harvest (e.g. bale) the failed wheat.
* NO. Producers can take action as soon as the soil has dried out.

Re-cropping considerations
If producers want to re-crop this spring, planting through the old wheat crop may pose a challenge. Probably the biggest issue to deal with is the residual effect of whatever herbicide was applied on the wheat. Certain herbicides are persistent and have significant re-cropping guidelines (refer to the accompanying eUpdate article “Herbicide carryover considerations when re-cropping damaged wheat”).

Planting of glyphosate-resistant corn or soybeans could be done prior to termination of the wheat; however, if planting grain sorghum, producers should ensure that the wheat has been fully terminated before planting as there are very limited herbicide options for controlling grass in established sorghum.

Planters equipped for no-till (appropriate residue managers, furrow closers, and starter fertilizer applicators) should have no difficulty effectively placing seed through wheat residue and establishing good stands. The amount of residue moved out of the row ahead of the furrow opener can vary considerably depending on planter capability and grower preference. There are advantages to leaving as much residue as possible in the furrow area without hair pinning residue in the seed zone. Sharp opening disk and appropriate downforce settings will improve performance. In some field scenarios, producers may be better off not using residue managers/row cleaners depending on the condition of the terminated wheat and the previous crop residue,

Seed needs to be firmed in the bottom of the furrow. Various after-market closing wheels may be useful when planting in these conditions to avoid compacted furrow side walls and achieve good seed coverage.

For corn or sorghum, the practice of placing starter fertilizer near or in the furrow at planting may be important, depending on soil fertility level and planting date. A follow-up band application of the remaining N requirement can be made based on anticipated soil residual N and crop potential. Volunteer wheat control later in the season should be much less of an issue because of the wheat crop will be terminated before grain has been produced.

For producers with high accuracy (RTK) guidance and wider spaced wheat (10 or 12”), they may be able to split the existing wheat rows with their row crop planter. If that is not possible, the row crop should be planted with a heading slightly angled to the existing wheat rows (5-10 degrees). This will result in better handling of the residue by the planter, better ride quality for the planter row units, and more consistent depth and placement of the seed.

Insurance considerations
Producers who wish to destroy the wheat crop and go to a second crop have the following options after they talk to their crop insurance agents:

1. **Plant, but not insure, a second crop.**
   a. The insured will collect 100% of the indemnity for the first crop after the loss adjuster confirms the loss.
   b. Written notice must be provided that the insured elects not to insure the acreage of a second crop

2. **Plant and insure a second crop.**
   a. The insured will collect 35% of the wheat indemnity
   b. The insured will pay 35% of the wheat premium
   c. If there is no loss on the second insured crop, the insured can request the remaining 65% of the wheat indemnity
   d. If there is a loss on the second crop, the insured may:
      i. Waive the indemnity on the second crop and collect the remaining indemnity on wheat (also pay remaining premium)
      ii. Collect the loss on the second crop and keep the 35% wheat indemnity. There are a couple of exceptions to this rule.

A key, for crop insurance purposes, is whether the wheat had reached the headed stage at the time it is destroyed and planted to second non-irrigated crop, which has no occurred in the majority of the area affected by freeze this year. You and your crop insurance agent should check the Actuarial Documents in your county for the
second non-irrigated crop. If the second non-irrigated crop is not insurable, the producer would need to keep any production on that crop separate from his or her other acres of the crop.

In several counties in southeast Kansas insurance is available for FAC soybeans. In those counties, the rules for planting another non-irrigated crop after failed or harvested wheat are different. RMA has posted a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on their website that addresses Following Another Crop and Not Following Another Crop (NFAC) Cropping Practices. The FAQ is located at https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/News-Room/Frequently-Asked-Questions

In summary, if you have a failed wheat crop, there may be some options available to you on that acreage. However, it is important to review your county Actuarial Documents and consult your crop insurance agent, which should aid you in developing a plan for that acreage that best fits your farming operation. Lastly, some general advice for wheat farmers is to order wheat seed for this fall early.

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**Fertilize Irrigated Cool-Season Lawns in May**

May is an excellent time to fertilize cool-season lawns such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass if they will be irrigated throughout the summer. Non-irrigated lawns often go through a period of summer dormancy because of drought and do not need this fertilization.

May is a good time to fertilize because the springtime flush of growth characteristic of these grasses has tapered off, so the fertilizer you apply will be less likely to cause excessive shoot growth than if you fertilized at a full rate in April. Slow-release nitrogen sources are ideal. These nitrogen sources promote controlled growth, which is desirable as the stressful summer weather approaches. Relatively few fertilizers available to the homeowner supply ALL of the nitrogen in the slowly available form. But one such product that is widely available is Milorganite. Other such products available in the retail market include cottonseed meal, alfalfa-based fertilizers, and any other products derived from plants or animals. (Bloodmeal is an exception, and contrary to popular belief, the nitrogen it supplies is quickly available.) These products are all examples of natural organic fertilizers. They typically contain less than 10 percent nitrogen by weight, so compared to most synthetic fertilizers, more product must be applied to get the same amount of nitrogen. Translation: they are more expensive! Apply enough to give the lawn one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. For example, if the fertilizer is 6 percent nitrogen by weight, you will need to apply almost 17 pounds of fertilizer product per 1,000 square feet.

Summer lawn fertilizers that contain at least a portion of the nitrogen as slow-release are fine to use as well. Be sure to follow label directions. If cost is prohibitive, you can use the less expensive quick-release (i.e., soluble) sources, but split the application into two doses as follows: apply enough to give the lawn 0.5 lb nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in May and again in early June. (Ward Upham)

**Delay Planting Winter Squash and Pumpkins**

Though early May is a good time to plant most of our warm-season crops such as tomatoes and peppers, it is best to delay planting of winter squash and pumpkins until about mid-June. Planting those two crops now will result in a crop that is mature enough to be attractive to the first generation of squash bugs in July. Delaying until about June 20 will allow plants to escape attack by the first generation. This later planting will also mean that pumpkins will mature closer to Halloween so that long-term storage is not needed.

There will be a second generation of squash bugs that will hatch in August. Plant will need to be protected from that generation. See our publication on squash bugs for information on means of control. (Ward Upham)
When Should I Plant My Garden?
That is a question I get every year, along with what varieties are best to plant. A couple of free publications from KSRE that can help you with those decisions are: MF315 Vegetable Garden Planting Guide and L41 Recommended Vegetable Varieties. One of the for sale publications is S51 Kansas Garden Guide. All of these publications can be downloaded for free at: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/publications/.

If you want to about gardening, Rebecca McMahon, Sedgwick County Horticulturalist has an online program series you can sign up for at https://www.sedgwick.k-state.edu/gardening-lawn-care/fruits-vegetables-nuts/victorygarden101.html. It looks like a great program. It is easy to catch up with the sessions you have missed.

Bagworms, It's Still Too Early to Spray
Timing is critical in many things, including controlling bagworms. Though handpicking is effective through much of the year, often it is impractical because of the sheer number of bagworms. However, if you only see a few bags, now would be a good time to pick them off and destroy them.

As we mentioned above, large populations of bagworms can make handpicking impractical. In such cases, spraying is recommended. New bagworms will likely hatch and leave the mother's bag in May but spraying is usually not recommended until June. Spraying now will be ineffective because the young are too well protected inside their mother's bag. Watch for an article on when and what to spray a bit later in the season. If you can’t wait, we do have some information in a publication at (https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/common-pest-problems/common-pest-problem-new/Bagworms.pdf) on bagworms that should prove helpful. (Ward Upham)

Eastern Tent Caterpillar
The larvae (caterpillars) of the Eastern tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma americanum*, have hatched from eggs are feeding on the leaves of trees and shrubs. After caterpillar’s hatch from eggs, they create a distinct white, silken nest (or tent) in the branch crotches of trees and shrubs including: birch, crabapple, hawthorn, mountain ash, poplar, willow, and flowering cherry, peach, and plum. The nest protects caterpillars from cold temperatures.
Caterpillars are black with a distinct light stripe that extends the length of the back and there are blue markings on the side of the body. There are five instars (stages between each molt). Eastern tent caterpillar is one of our earliest caterpillar defoliators, feeding on newly-emerged leaves, which reduces the ability of trees and shrubs to produce food by means of photosynthesis. Although feeding damage may not directly kill a tree or shrub, a decrease in photosynthesis can predispose plants to secondary pests such as wood-boring insects. Leaf quality can influence tree and shrub susceptibility to feeding. For instance, black cherry trees grown in the shade are less fed upon by Eastern tent caterpillars due to lower leaf nutritional quality.

The young or early instar (1st through 3rd) caterpillars are active during the daytime and reside in the silken nest at night. During the day caterpillars emerge from the silken nest and feed on plant leaves. On over-cast or cloudy days caterpillars will remain inside the silken nest. The final instar (5th) caterpillar only feeds at night. The length time of time that caterpillars spend feeding increases 4-fold between the 1st and 5th instars. However, feeding activity is contingent on temperature with caterpillars feeding longer under warmer temperatures than cooler temperatures. Eastern tent caterpillar overwinters as an egg mass attached to the branches or small twigs. There is one generation per year in Kansas.

The silken nests can be physically removed or disrupted by hand. You can destroy, disrupt, or open-up the silken nest using a rake or a forceful water spray. The young exposed caterpillars are susceptible to consumption by birds whereas the later instars are less fed upon because the hairs on the body deter birds from feeding on them.

Spray applications of the bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki*, or spinosad are effective in killing small (young) caterpillars and suppressing minor infestations of Eastern tent caterpillar. These insecticides are stomach poisons so caterpillars must ingest the material to be negatively affected. However, when caterpillars are mature and approximately 2 inches long, then pyrethroid-based insecticides (e.g. bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, and lambda-cyhalothrin) will need to be applied. It is important to apply insecticides when caterpillars are active
during the daytime to increase exposure to the insecticide. For more information on managing Eastern tent caterpillar populations contact your county or state extension specialist. (Raymond Cloyd)

I wanted everyone to know Hodgeman County Extension is here to help. For more information or have a question please email the Hodgeman County Extension of office at hg@listserv.ksu.edu. We are available by appointment at the Courthouse (9 am – noon, 1 pm – 5 pm, M-F). Please call (620) 357-8321 – office, during office hours or (620) 357-5315 - DeWayne’s cell. We will be putting pertinent information up on our website www.hodgeman.k-state.edu.