

## D's Notes 10/26/21

### 2021 Fall Ranch Management Seminar Series

The 2021 Fall Ranch Management Seminar Series is being hosted in Larned, on Wednesday, Nov. 10 with a meal starting at 5:30 pm at the J.A. Haas Building, 403 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street.

This seminar include a series of presentations focused on enhancing profit in beef production and a 'Town Hall' question-and-answer session where producers can ask questions to local/district and state extension specialists.

Producers are encouraged to bring their questions on cow-calf animal health, nutrition, genetics, reproduction and management to the session. Please RSVP by Thursday, November 4 by calling the Pawnee Co. Extension Office at 620-285-6901.

Online updates about the series can be found at *KSUBeef.org*.

### Kansas 4-Hers prep for new year, eyeing projects

Just a month removed from the Kansas State Fair, there may seem to be a lull in 4-H activities for many Kansas youth. Actually, the fun is just beginning.

Amy Sollock, a Kansas 4-H youth development specialist in the southwest region, said a new 4-H year kicked off in October and youth have some important decisions to make regarding which projects they will pursue over the next 12 months.

"We've got more than 30 project areas, so there's something for everybody," Sollock said. "Some kids naturally gravitate toward things they're already interested in. Or sometimes they'll pick... something they've never heard of, but it sounds exciting. And sometimes people pick things because a friend had a good time in it, or they know somebody who knows a lot about that and they want to learn with someone."

Animal sciences, baking, creative arts, photography, livestock...Sollock said information on all of the projects available to Kansas 4-Hers is available online. State 4-H officials have even published a Project Selection Guide, and each project area has its own web page to give in-depth details on the types of activities – and commitment – that is required.

"Every family needs to have that honest conversation with themselves at the beginning of the 4-H year," Sollock said. "How much time do you have to give? How dedicated are you going to be? What's your budget look like? Some projects – like caring for livestock – have more expense associated with them."

Other projects, she added, have very little expense involved, but still come with a given amount of time and energy that needs to be given throughout the coming year.

"This is something that we take seriously," Sollock said. "When you enroll in a project at the beginning of the 4-H year, it's a year-long experience – not just something to do in July at the county fair. You will learn about, talk about, read about the project all year long."

Youth are encouraged to select more than one project area for the year, Sollock said. How many, she adds, is up to the family and the amount of time they can dedicate over the next 12 months.

“We talk a lot about finding your spark in 4-H, and exploring interests and different things that look exciting to kids,” Sollock said. “Project work is an excellent way for them to find their spark. And who knows: It may lead to a potential career years down the road.”

Registration for the new Kansas 4-H year is now available online. Interested persons can also get more information about 4-H at the Hodgeman County Extension Office, 620-357-8321, located on the bottom floor of the Courthouse.

## **What Beef Producers Should Be Thinking About In November...**

*Tips by Dale Blasi, Extension Beef Specialist*

### **Spring Calving Cows**

#### *Cowherd Management*

- Pregnancy check (if not already completed)
  - If candidates for culling were not selected in September or October, it should be completed now.
  - Consider feeding cull cows to increase body weight, value, and utilize cheap feedstuffs. Value of gain is equal to the difference between the ending value and beginning values divided by the gain. Compare this to cost of gain figures. When cost of gain is less than value of gain, profit will be realized.
  - Body Condition Score
    - o Provide thin cows (body condition score 3s and 4s) extra feed now. Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements and quality feedstuffs.
  - In late fall and early winter, start feeding supplement to mature cows using these guidelines:
    - Dry grass 1½ - 2 lb supplement/day of a 40% CP supplement
    - Dry grass 3 - 4 lb supplement/day of a 20% supplement
    - Dry grass 10 lb good nonlegume hay, no supplement needed
    - o Compare supplements on a cost per pound of nutrient basis.
  - Utilize crop residues.
    - o Average body condition cows can be grazed at 1 to 2 acres/cow for 30 days assuming normal weather. Available forage is directly related to the grain production levels.
    - o Limiting nutrients are usually protein, phosphorus, and vitamin A.
    - o Strip graze or rotate fields to improve grazing efficiency.
  - Discontinue feeding tetracycline if used for anaplasmosis control.
- #### *Calf Management*
- Participate in National Level Breed Association Performance Programs CHAPS and(or) other ranch record systems.

Finalize plans to merchandise calves or to background through yearling or finishing programs.

#### *Forage/Pasture Management*

Plan winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.

#### *General Management*

Document cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) programs.

Review management decisions, lower your costs on a per unit of production concept.

Plan your marketing program, including private treaty, consignment sales, test stations, production sales, etc.

### **REMINDERS**

1. Dig cannas, glads, dahlias and other tender bulbs for winter storage.
2. Spray for winter annuals such as henbit and chickweed as well as dandelions in the lawn.
3. Till or turn the soil of the garden to add organic matter and eliminate overwintering sites for insects.
4. Remove dead annuals after killing frost.

### **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 and would work well at this time of year. 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. (Ward Upham)

### **Garden Mums**

As soon as garden chrysanthemums are done flowering, you may cut the plants back to 2 to 3 inches high. Some gardeners prefer to leave the top growth so that it provides some protection from fluctuating soil temperatures. If you choose to cut the tops off, apply a layer of mulch over the top of your mums after the ground has frozen or if the forecast calls for a sharp drop in temperature. Mums should not completely dry out during the winter. It may be necessary to water occasionally if sufficient rain or snow has not fallen. (Ward Upham)

### **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. (Ward Upham)

## **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)

## **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. (Ward Upham)

## **Prepping Your Lawnmower for Winter**

Spring lawn care starts with proper lawnmower winterization.

Taking care of a home lawn can be time consuming but rewarding for many homeowners. Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham said as mowing season ends, it is important to service mowers before storing them for winter.

“Make sure you drain the gas tank of gasoline-powered engines or use a gasoline stabilizer,” Upham said. “Untreated gasoline can become thick and gummy.”

Spark plugs should be replaced. Before putting the new one in, place a few drops of oil inside the hole to lubricate the cylinder. Battery terminals usually corrode during the season, so they should be cleaned with a wire-bristle brush before being removed and stored for winter.

“If you remove the battery, be sure to store it in a protected location for the winter (a cool basement works best),” Upham said.

Cleaning and storing mowers properly is just one part of end-of-season-care. Upham also suggests using this time to sharpen mower blades.

“Sharpening rotary mower blades is fairly straightforward,” said Upham, who listed the steps to guide the process:

- Check for major blade damage and replace what can't be fixed.
- Remove grass and debris with a damp cloth. Dry the blade before sharpening.
- Use a grinding wheel or hand-file to remove nicks from the cutting edge. If using a grinding wheel, match the existing edge angle to the wheel. If hand-filing, file at the same angle as the existing edge.
- File edges to 1/32 inch, or about the size of a period at the end of a sentence.
- Avoid overheating of the blade, as this could warp it.
- For optimum winter storage, clean the blade with solvent or oil. Avoid using water because it will promote rust.

“Following these tips can help you better prepare your mower for winter storage and also save you some steps this coming spring,” Upham said.

### **There is Still Time to Plant Spring-Flowering Bulbs**

Generally, it is recommended to plant hardy bulbs (especially daffodils) in October to give them enough time to root before winter. But it is certainly not too late to plant them in early November. As long as the soil temperatures are above 40 degrees F, the bulbs should continue root development. You can find the previous week's soil temperature readings for areas across the state from our Weather Data Library at <http://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/soiltemp/>

Although many of the best bulbs have probably already been purchased, garden centers may still have a good selection. Be sure to select large, firm bulbs that have not begun to sprout. While many bulbs can adapt to a wide range of soil types, none can tolerate poorly drained soil. Prepare the planting bed by adding organic matter such as peat moss, well-rotted manure, or compost and mix into the soil.

Adequate fertility is essential. It is best to rely on a soil test to determine what nutrients are needed. Garden soils that have been fertilized regularly in the past may have excess levels of phosphorus. Excess phosphorus can interfere with the uptake of other essential micronutrients though levels need to be extremely high to be of concern. In cases where levels of phosphorus are high, it would be better to use a fertilizer relatively high in nitrogen such as a 29-5-4, 27-3-3, or something similar. Although these are lawn fertilizers, they will work well for our purposes as long as they don't contain a weed preventer or weed killer. Apply these fertilizers at the rate of 2/3 pound (3 cups) per 100 square feet.

Organic sources of fertilizers low in phosphorus include blood meal (12-0-0) applied at 2 pounds per 100 square feet (1 tsp per sq ft), cottonseed meal (6-0.4-1.5) applied at the rate of 3 pounds per 100 square feet (2 tsps /per sq ft) and soybean meal (7-2-1) applied at the rate of 3 pounds per 100 square feet (2 tsps /per sq ft).

In the absence of a soil test, or if phosphorus is needed, add a low analysis, balanced fertilizer such as 5-10-5 or 6-10-4 at the rate of 3 pounds (6 cups) per 100 square feet of bed or 2 tsps/per sq ft. Mix all amendments thoroughly with the soil before planting the bulbs.

The size and species of the bulb determines how deep to plant. In general, the depth to the bottom of the bulb should be about 2 to 3 times the size of the bulb, but check the planting instructions specific to each particular flower. (Ward Upham)

### **Perennial Garden Clean-up**

Fall is traditionally a time for cleaning up gardens. Normally, we recommend clear-cutting dead stems to help control insect and disease problems. With herbaceous perennials that have been pest free, you might want to consider leaving some to provide structure, form, and color to the winter garden. For example, ornamental grasses can be attractive even during the winter months. However those near structures should be cut to the ground because they can be a fire hazard. Perennials with evergreen or semi-evergreen foliage can provide color. Of course, some perennials are naturally messy after dormancy and should be cut back in the fall.

Foliage can be left for other reasons. For example, foliage left on marginally hardy plants such as tender ferns helps ensure overwintering of plant crowns. Also, seed heads on some perennial plants can provide seed for birds. (Ward Upham)

### **Fall Colors of Trees**

Part of the allure of fall foliage is color variation. There are trees that turn red, purple, yellow, orange and brown.

Specific plant pigments determine individual colors. Foliage derives its normal green color from chlorophyll, the substance that captures the energy of the sun. Other pigments produce fall colors. Reds and purples are caused by anthocyanins, yellows by xanthophylls, and oranges by a combination of carotenes and xanthophylls. Browns are the result of tannins present in the leaf. Most of these substances are present throughout the growing season but are masked by the green color produced by chlorophyll. Anthocyanins are the exception and are produced after the chlorophyll is destroyed in the fall.

If you have ever seen pictures of New England in the fall, you have probably wondered why trees in Kansas usually do not color as well. This difference is partly because of the tree species prevalent in New England. Certain oaks and maples naturally produce good color and are abundant in New England. Coloring also is influenced by the weather.

Warm, sunny days and cool nights are ideal for good color. The sunny days encourage photosynthesis and, thus, sugar accumulation in the leaves. Cool nights slow respiration which helps conserve those sugars.

As fall progresses, each leaf develops an abscission layer at the base of the petiole, or leaf stem, that prevents these sugars from being transported down the trunk to the roots for storage. This high sugar content in the leaves produces more intense colors. Cloudy days and warm nights prevent some of the sugar accumulation in the leaves and results in less vibrant colors.

Weather during other parts of the growing season also can have an effect. Heavy rains in the early spring or hot, dry weather during the summer can both have a deleterious effect on fall color.

The length of time a tree maintains fall color also depends on weather. Reds, yellows and oranges are short-lived when trees undergo frosts and freezes. (Ward Upham)

### **Caring for Houseplants During the Winter Months**

Houseplants need varying amounts of water and fertilizer at different times of the year. They need the most during summer when light levels are high and days are long. They need the least during the short days of winter. The primary reason for this is light. Light produces the fuel for plant growth. More light allows more growth, which results in a greater demand for water and nutrients. When light is limiting, the need for water and nutrients decreases dramatically. Therefore, it becomes easy to overwater and overfertilize during the winter months. Excess water and fertilizer can harm a plant by damaging the root system. Overwatering can suffocate roots by eliminating oxygen and excess fertilizer can burn roots. Therefore, it is best not to fertilize at all during the middle of winter (December-January) and to fertilize sparingly during November and February (maybe 1/4 a normal rate).

It is never wise to water on a set schedule. Rather, allow the potting soil to tell you when watering is needed. Check to see if the soil is moist 1-inch deep by inserting your finger into the potting mix. Don't water unless the mix is dry. (Ward Upham)

### **Preserving Garden Tools**

Hoes, shovels and other common garden tools often have wooden handles that can deteriorate over time. Storing tools in a protected location can slow that process, but normal use will still expose the tools to the elements. The end of the season is a good time to clean up and protect the handles so they will last for many years. Weathering can raise the grain of wood, resulting in splinters. A light sanding can smooth the handle. Follow that with a light application of wood preservative, boiled linseed oil or polyurethane to protect the wood. Wipe off any excess after a few minutes as oil-based products can attract dirt. Cleaning any dirt off metal parts and coating with a light application of oil can prevent rust. Good tools are expensive. A few minutes of care after the season is over can help preserve them for many years to come. (Ward Upham)