

Cattle Chat: Monitoring water sources to protect herd health

When cattle have been without water, a producer's first instinct may be to give them unlimited access as quickly as possible. But *Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute* experts say that response can sometimes create a life-threatening situation.

During a recent *Cattle Chat* podcast, <https://ksubci.org/2026/06/12/understanding-neurologic-cases-in-cattle-diagnosis-causes-and-prevention/>, produced by K-State's Beef Cattle Institute, veterinarians discussed water management challenges and the risks associated with poor water quality, limited water access and improper rehydration of severely dehydrated cattle.

"In western Kansas and other drought-prone areas, sometimes a producer will discover that a well has gone dry and cattle have been without water for a period of time," said K-State veterinarian Brad White. "When you find that situation, it is important to not simply give cattle all the water they can drink."

According to K-State veterinarians Scott Fritz and Bob Larson, cattle that have been severely dehydrated can develop a condition known as salt toxicity if they consume large quantities of water too rapidly.

"We call it salt toxicity," Larson said. "The cattle don't have to be eating a high-salt diet. If a cow becomes really dehydrated and then suddenly gets all the water she wants, that rapid change can cause a brain lesion and often leads to death."

Because of that risk, Fritz recommends gradually rehydrating cattle that have been deprived of water.

"As difficult as it sounds, you have to allow them to have a little bit of water at a time," Fritz said. "If cattle have been without water, the best approach is to try and rehydrate them over a 24-hour period."

While emergency situations can occur, the veterinarians emphasized that prevention is the best strategy. Larson encouraged producers to regularly monitor water sources and develop contingency plans before problems arise.

"Just because you have a pond doesn't mean you don't need to monitor that water source," Larson said. "You need to think about alternative water sources as well, whether that's hauling water or encouraging cattle to utilize more than one water source."

If hauling water becomes necessary, Fritz said producers should be careful about the equipment used. "Hauling water is stressful and labor intensive, but sometimes it becomes necessary," Fritz said. "One concern is using tanks that have previously been used for crop chemicals. Even small amounts of residue can create severe health issues for livestock."

Fritz recommends using water tanks dedicated exclusively to hauling water rather than repurposing containers previously used for pesticides, herbicides or other agricultural products.

The veterinarians also discussed water quality concerns, particularly the threat posed by blue-green algae blooms in ponds. "There are several types of algae that can occur in ponds, including blue-green algae," Fritz said. "If you suspect a problem, you can have a water sample tested."

Blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, can produce toxins harmful to livestock. Fritz noted that blooms often develop following large rainfall events when nutrients wash into ponds and create favorable growing conditions.

"If blue-green algae is present and blooming, livestock should not be allowed to drink that water," Fritz said.

In those situations, producers may need to temporarily fence cattle away from the affected pond and provide an alternative water source until testing confirms the water is safe.

"Fencing cattle out and keeping them away until the pond tests clear may seem expensive up front," Fritz said. "But it can save producers significant losses and cattle health problems in the long run."

"Water is one of the most important nutrients cattle consume every day," Larson said. "Making sure it is available, safe and properly managed is a critical part of herd health."

The full discussion is available on the *Beef Cattle Institute's Cattle Chat* podcast, <https://ksubci.org/2026/06/12/understanding-neurologic-cases-in-cattle-diagnosis-causes-and-prevention/>. Questions regarding the podcast or other cattle-related inquiries can be sent by email to bci@ksu.edu.

"Cow-calf Management Considerations for July 2026"

By Jason M. Warner, Ph.D., Extension Cow-Calf Specialist

Cow Herd Management

For spring-calving cowherds:

1. Score cows for BCS concurrent with grass growth.
2. 2-4 year old females and thin females will respond most to early-weaning. If you plan to early-wean:
3. Develop your plan for feeding and marketing calves. Prepare weaning/receiving pens and waterers in advance.
4. If feeding early-weaned calves, test your forages and have your ration plan and ingredients in place 2-3 weeks prior to weaning.
5. Schedule early pregnancy checking activities if not already done.

For late-summer and early -fall calving cowherds:

1. Evaluate cows for BCS and adjust your plan to ensure mature cows are ≥ 5.0 and 2-4 year old females are ≥ 6.0 at calving.
2. The final 60 days prior to calving represents the last opportunity to add BCS economically. Review your calving health protocols as needed.

Closely manage free-choice salt and mineral programs.

1. Record date and amount of salt and mineral offered and calculate herd consumption on a pasture or group basis.
2. Adjust how you are offering product to cattle if needed to achieve target intake. If consumption is 2X the target intake, then cost will be too!
3. Properly store bags and pallets to avoid damage and product loss.

Continue to monitor bulls and their activity throughout the breeding season.

1. Monitor BCS, particularly on young bulls.
2. If pulling bulls from cows to manage the length of the breeding season, schedule those dates and have them on the calendar in advance.

3. If bulls are $BCS \leq 5.0$ after breeding, consider supplementing to regain BCS going into fall.

Calf Management

1. If creep feeding calves, closely monitor intake and calf condition/fleshiness. Monitor calves for summer respiratory illness.
2. Schedule any pre-weaning vaccination or processing activities.

General Management

1. Visit [KSUBeef.org](https://www.ksu.edu/extension/beef/) (<https://www.ksu.edu/extension/beef/>) for info and events! Evaluate grass growth and adjust your grazing plan as needed.
2. Continue efforts to control invasive species in pastures.
3. Employ multiple strategies, chemistries for late-season fly/insect control. Begin taking inventory of harvested forages for fall feed needs.
4. If planning to harvest corn silage, prepare your pile/bunker site and equipment.
5. Use the Management Minder tool on [KSUBeef.org](https://www.ksu.edu/extension/beef/) to plan key management activities for your cowherd for the rest of the year
<https://cowweb.exnet.iastate.edu/CowWeb/faces/Index.jsp>.
6. With high feeder calf prices, consider price risk management tools.
7. Visit with your local FSA and extension office if you plan to utilize CRP acres for emergency forage use or other assistance programs.

Updates To The Noxious Weed List of Kansas:

In the landscape we all experience difficult to control weeds. Some spread rapidly, some produce countless seeds, and are just persistent in our attempts to control them. Some of these aggressive plants may be native to our state, others may be introduced from other parts of the world. Of all the plants that may be considered weeds in our property, 16 plants hold a special designation as a “noxious weed” in Kansas.

A noxious weed, simply defined, is a weed considered harmful (to the environment, public health, animals, agriculture, recreation, wildlife etc.) and is designated by law as a plant that is subject to legal regulations to control it. In Kansas there are 16 weeds designated by law as noxious weeds, 5 of which were added to the list in May of 2026.

Special attention is given to controlling noxious weeds because they can displace native plant species, may interfere with agricultural crop production, intensify erosion, damage wildlife habitat and decrease property values. As a result, Kansas law requires all people to control the spread of any noxious weed and eradicate it on land in which they manage (either private or public) by using an official control method. Control methods must prevent both the production of seed and destroy the plant’s ability to reproduce by vegetative means.

Written into Kansas law, noxious weeds are categorized into three groups. The first group is weeds that are generally not found in the state or have limited distribution throughout the state (Category A Weeds). The goal is to eradicate these weeds to prevent establishment in Kansas. The next group of weeds are established in scattered populations around the state (Category B Weeds). The goal is to prevent further spread of these weeds. The last group of weeds are well-established in Kansas, often state-wide in large population (Category C Weeds). These weeds should be managed to minimize their negative impacts.

When changes went into effect in May 2026 to the Kansas noxious weed law, the following changes were made. Diffuse Knapweed, Spotted Knapweed, Common Teasel, Cutleaf Teasel, and Amur Honeysuckle were all added to the Noxious Weed list. Pignut was removed from the list of noxious weeds. With these changes, the state hopes to control these weeds before they become a problem statewide.

The full list of noxious weeds in Kansas now includes (grouped by category):

Category A Weeds (found infrequently): Diffuse Knapweed; Hoary Cress; Kudzu; Leafy Spurge; Quackgrass; Russian Knapweed; Spotted Knapweed

Category B Weeds (found in scattered populations): Canada Thistle; Common Teasel; Cutleaf Teasel

Category C Weeds (found commonly state-wide): Amur Honeysuckle; Bur Ragweed; Field Bindweed; Johnsongrass; Musk Thistle; Sericea Lespedeza

Weeds in all three categories must be eradicated wherever detected and actively managed to protect from spreading into other land areas across the state.

In addition, individual counties can declare other plant species as noxious weeds in their specific county. Caucasian Bluestem and Bull Thistle are two plants commonly identified as noxious on a county by county basis. Check with your local County Weed Department to find out if any other species have been designated as noxious in your county, or for assistance in noxious weed control.

Visit the *Kansas Department of Agriculture's website* to learn more about noxious weeds of Kansas: <https://www.agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/plant-protection-weed-control/noxious-weed-control-program>.

Killer wasps? Only the cicadas need to worry

They may look brilliant to the human eye, but cicada killer wasps are certainly no ally to the six-legged, five-eyed cicada whose steady buzz can be heard on most summer nights in Kansas.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Matt McKernan said it is common for cicada killer wasps to build nests in lawn and garden areas around the home.

“At about two inches long, cicada killers are an intimidating wasp. They have reddish-brown colored wings, head and legs and a black abdomen with wide, yellow stripes,” McKernan said.

Females have a stinger that is used to paralyze their prey. McKernan said they rarely sting people unless provoked. Males are smaller and do not have a stinger.

“Although males tend to be more aggressive, they are not harmful since they cannot sting you,” McKernan noted. “Male cicada killers establish territories near a female’s nest, and fly around patrolling for intruders. Once they determine you are not a threat, they tend to fly off.”

“Females are responsible for locating cicadas and paralyzing them with their stinger. She then carries the cicada back to her underground burrow. Each burrow contains three to four cells, each with one or two cicadas,” McKernan said.

There is one generation per year of cicada killers, beginning with larvae hatching. Adult cicada killers are most abundant during late June, July and August, then die in early fall.

“Cicada killers typically cause very little damage to the landscape. A heavy infestation may become a nuisance as they protect their nests, and the burrows may be considered unsightly, especially in a lawn area,” McKernan said.

Cicada killers prefer to locate their nests in areas with full sun and well-drained, light soils, he added.

“They may burrow along sidewalks or flowerbeds but do not like areas covered with mulch,” McKernan said. “Maintaining a thick, healthy lawn is the best control for preventing burrows.”

McKernan warns that pesticides are not usually necessary since adults are only present for about two and a half months beginning mid- to late summer, and usually do not sting humans unless provoked. In areas of frequent human activity, permethrin may be applied to the opening of burrows for control.

VIDEO OF THE WEEK:

As many gardeners have experienced, tomato plants can suffer from many insect, disease, and environmental stress problems. In this two-part video series, we'll explore some of the most common early season tomato problems, including physiological leaf curl, blossom end rot, herbicide injury, septoria leaf spot, and more. This week's *video discusses part one of some of the most common tomato problems*, and in only two minutes, will help you identify some of the most common tomato issues happening in the garden right now:

<https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/common-tomato-problems-part-1>

GARDEN CALENDAR:

- Renovate June bearing strawberry beds after fruit production has stopped.
- Plant sweet potatoes now. Sweet potatoes can be planted from mid- to late-May through June.
- Pinch herbs to keep bushy and fresh with new growth.
- Once the foliage from spring bulbs has turned completely brown, it is safe to remove dead foliage.
- Deadhead spent flower blossoms to encourage annuals and perennials to continue flowering.
- Core aerate zoysia, Bermuda, and buffalograss lawns for removal of thatch and overall vigor.
- Fertilize zoysia & bermudagrass lawns with high nitrogen fertilizer such as 27-3-3 or 46-0-0.
- Check for bagworms and control as needed.
- Prune hedges as needed to maintain shape.
- Fertilize houseplants throughout the summer months to encourage growth.

Mulch Tomato Plants Mid-June:

While mulching is a beneficial practice for most plants, heavily mulching warm season vegetables, such as tomatoes, in the early growing season can limit plant growth. This is especially true in springs with consistently wet soils. For tomatoes and many other warm season vegetables, a delay in mulch applications may be beneficial to allow the soils to warm up sufficiently for healthy root growth.

Tomato plants need a soil temperature of at least 60°F to grow well. In fact, for tomatoes soil temperatures near 77°F are ideal for optimal nutrient and water uptake. Now that average soil temperatures are consistently above 65°F to 70°F across Kansas, and nearing averages in the mid-70's, it is an important time to consider mulching tomato plants.

Mulching tomatoes in mid-June offers many benefits. Tomatoes prefer even levels of soil moisture, and mulches help conserve soil moisture by limiting excessive water evaporation from the ground. Mulches also help to insulate the soil, moderating soil temperatures closer to ideal growing conditions during the heat of the day. Mulch is also effective in suppressing weeds, which compete with tomatoes for soil moisture and nutrients. In addition, mulching helps to limit the spread of soil borne disease and protects the soil surface from compaction and soil crusting.

There are many types of mulches that can be applied to tomato plants. Hay and straw mulches are very popular for tomatoes, but may contain weed or volunteer grain seeds. Shredded leaves, cottonseed hulls, compost, and cocoa hulls are also common mulches used in the vegetable garden. Grass clippings can also be used but should be applied as a thin layer – only 2 to 3 inches thick. Grass clippings should also be dry when applied as mulch, as wet clippings can mold, harden, and make it difficult for water to pass through. Be sure not to use clippings from any lawns that have been treated with a weed killer or other herbicides. Most weed killers applied to lawns require at least three to four mowings before clippings are safe to collect for mulch. The grass clippings from any lawn exposed to products containing quinclorac (common weed killer used for crabgrass control) should not be used as mulch.

Fruit Tree Reminders:

To maximize the yield of your fruit trees this summer, here are a few important maintenance reminders:

- Thin fruit on apple and peach trees. Fruit should be 6-8 inches apart.
- Remove suckers from the base of fruit trees and grape vines.
- Water as needed. During hot weather, 1- inch of water per week is the recommendation.
- Comb or position grapevine shoots to prevent tangling and promote more uniform sun exposure.
- Follow disease and pest management protocol. For more information about fruit sprays see our extension publication: *Spray Guide for Growing Stone Fruit at Home*, https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/spray-guide-for-growing-stone-fruit-at-home_MF3430.pdf

Pinching Mums One Last Time Before July 4th:

Many garden perennials benefit from a simple technique called pinching or heading back. This process encourages lateral buds to develop, resulting in a shorter, sturdier and fuller plant. *Chrysanthemums*, *Autumn Joy Sedum*, *Asters*, *Goldenrod*, *Joe Pye Weed*, and *Yarrow* are all great examples of plants that benefit from pinching back.

While pinching back can be accomplished one to three times per year on most of these perennial plants in Kansas, the last pinch should take place before July 4th, in order to allow adequate time for flower development. Otherwise, flower development may be delayed and blooms may be killed off by early frosts before flowering is complete.

Pinch back these perennials by removing the top inch of growth, using your thumbnail and forefinger to pinch off new growth. A pair of pruners, scissors, or hedge shears could also be used. When pinching, never remove more than one-third of the overall height of the plant at one time.

Check out this *Kansas Healthy Yards* video on pinching mums for more information: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/how-to-grow-big-bushy-annuals>

Preventative Grub Control In Kansas:

There are several insects in Kansas that produce grubs as their larval stage, and most all these grubs commonly feed on turfgrass roots as a primary food source during the grub stage. Larvae of the Southern Masked Chafers, Japanese Beetles and several species of May Beetles/June Bugs are all common grubs found in Kansas. While the lifecycle of each insect varies (Masked chafers and Japanese beetles have a one-year lifecycle, and May/June beetles have a three-year lifecycle), they have a similar appearance as grubs and cause identical damage to turfgrass.

When identifying grub damage to lawns, symptoms include wilted grass, thinned stands, yellowed or browned areas, and dead spots. Many other environmental problems, diseases, and improper care practices can cause similar appearance, so digging down to the root system of the turf is important to confirm the presence of grubs. Grub damaged lawns often peel back, lift up, or turf pulls back easily when severe grub damage has separated the turfgrass roots from the soil. Usually, this damage is most obvious in the fall, beginning mid to late September.

Grub damage can be managed in one of two ways: preventatively, or with rescue treatments when grubs are most actively feeding. For lawns with a history of grub activity and damage, now is the time to consider taking preventative measures.

Lawns that have had a history of grub damage can be treated with an insecticide containing the active ingredient imidacloprid before the young grubs hatch. These products are usually applied from late June to early July but can be applied as early as May. Imidacloprid works by interfering with the transmission of nerve impulses in insects and has a low toxicity rating for humans and pets. Be sure to read and follow the directions on the label, including guidance on watering in the product after application.

Remember, all preventative insecticides should be applied at least four to six weeks before grub eggs hatch to ensure insecticide residues are present to kill young grubs.

Visit our *Grub Management in Turfgrass Using Insecticides* publication for more information about the lifecycle and control of grubs: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/grub-management-in-turfgrass-using-insecticides_MF3439.pdf

Evaluate And Remove Staking On Trees:

Staking is not always a required practice when planting new trees and shrubs. The purpose of staking or guying is to prevent movement of the root system and lower trunk. This is because movement in the top of the tree is desirable, and will strengthen the tree more quickly.

There are times and situations when the benefits of staking outweigh the disadvantages. In these cases, trees should be staked as low as possible on the tree trunk to anchor the root ball and prevent damage to new roots as they establish.

If young trees are staked, the trees must be checked monthly during the growing season and after storms or strong wind. The staking system should be snug, but not to the point of making an impression or indentation on the trunk or branches. Expanded trunk growth will be most noticeable in the early summer and late fall, after the tree undergoes its early spring and late summer flushes of growth. When that happens, loosen the tie or wire around the trunk.

Do not stake a tree any longer than necessary. Stakes should be removed after one growing season, but may remain in place for a second season only if additional support is required.

After removing the staking system, check the tree's stability. If the root system or ground around the roots still move when the trunk is moved, or if the trunk bends excessively, loosely reattach the staking for one more growing season. Remember to reevaluate the staking regularly until the stakes are safe to remove. *Matthew McKernan, Consumer Horticulture Extension Associate*

Making jelly? The pectin you use makes a difference

Experienced jelly-makers will tell you one enduring fact: All pectin is not created equal.

There are two types of pectin, liquid and dry. Which one to use depends on the recipe you're following, says Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee.

"Jam and jelly recipes will tell you which pectin to use," said Blakeslee, who is coordinator of *K-State's Rapid Response Center for Food Science*, <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/>. "Both have equal success when ingredients are measured properly and you follow the recipe's instructions."

Pectins are a group of pectic polysaccharides, or long-chain carbohydrate molecules, and are key to helping jams and jellies to gel. Blakeslee said some fruits do not need added pectin, while others do. Liquid and dry pectin are not interchangeable in recipes.

"Dry pectin is usually made from citrus fruit; liquid pectin is made from apples," Blakeslee said. "Those products have different natural pH values, or acid content."

Citrus has a natural pH value of 2-3. Apples have a natural pH of 3-4.

"Pectin also has other types of acid added," Blakeslee said. "So this can affect the gelling properties of the jam or jelly if the balance between the acid, sugar, fruit and pectin is incorrect. Some recipes recommend adding extra lemon juice to help balance the mixture and improve gelling properties."

Before using pectin to make jam or jelly, "pay attention to the (use-by) date on the package for best results," Blakeslee said. "Old pectin can cause weak gel formation, resulting in a syrupy product. Powdered pectin can be stored in the freezer to extend its shelf life."

To make jam or jelly with low- or no-sugar, Blakeslee urges home cooks to be sure to use the pectin and recipes designated for those products. This pectin is formulated to create a gel with a lower amount of sugar. Some artificial sweeteners, such as sucralose, can be used with this type of pectin. Do not lower the sugar content when using regular commercial pectin.

If jam or jelly doesn't gel properly after canning, Blakeslee said it is still possible to re-make the product, depending on the type of pectin used. More information on doing this is available online from the *National Center for Home Preservation*, <https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/make-jam-jelly/jams-jellies-general-information/remaking-soft-jellies/>.

But if the product still won't gel, Blakeslee says, all is not lost: "Simply use it as a syrup for pancakes, waffles or ice cream," she said.

"If a jam or jelly turns out stiff, it cannot be remade. But it could be warmed up and used as a fruit syrup topping or a meat glaze. Learn more from the *National Center for Home Food Preservation*, <https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/make-jam-jelly/jams-jellies-general-information/stiff-jams-or-jellies/>."