D's Notes
08/24/26

K-State Beef Stocker Field Day

Register now for the 27th Annual K-State Beef Stocker Field Day to be hosted on Thursday, September 24th, in Manhattan, KS, at the Beef Stocker Unit (4330 Marlatt Ave.) We have a great program lined up featuring practical information and management tips to help you achieve greater flexibility and optimize your stocker operation in the evolving beef industry.

Topics include: Beef Cattle Outlook; The Alltech Method: Proven Strategies for Stocker Cattle Performance; Considerations for Using Corn Silage in Growing/Backgrounding Programs; Optimizing Mineral Nutrition of Calves – Pre- and Post-Weaning Strategies; Developing Tactics of When and Where to Pen Cattle; Does Theileria impact the health of newly arrived stocker cattle?

The day includes a barbeque brisket lunch and will conclude with a good old-fashioned prairie oyster fry.

For more information or to register visit asi.ksu.edu/stockerfieldday.

Cattle Chat: The economics of creep feeding

As the grazing season winds down toward fall, Kansas State University veterinarians say cattle producers may want to consider the practice of "creep feeding" to sustain growth in calves.

In a recent episode of *"Cattle Chat with the Beef Cattle Institute,"* https://ksubci.org/2026/08/07/brd-around-the-world-and-the-economics-of-creep-feeding/, veterinarians Brad White, Bob Larson and Phillip Lancaster discussed potential benefits as well as potential disadvantages.

What is creep feeding?

"(Creep feeding is) providing some source of feed that nursing calves have access to that the dams do not have access to, which can be several different things," Lancaster said. "We think about a creep feeder where we're feeding a grain supplement and have a creep gate where the calves can get to the feeder and the cows can't."

Lancaster also mentioned creep grazing, where a plot of high quality forage, is sectioned off with a creep gait just for the calves to get into and graze on.

"Starting now and going into the early fall, forage quantity and/or quality are generally going down," Larson said. "For an adult cow that doesn't have a growth component, the nutrients that are available in the forage may be perfectly fine to maintain her body condition. But for a young, growing animal…think of it like a teenager raiding the fridge. As the forage quantity and quality decreases, so does the total caloric potential for that calf to consume. Maybe we could add some additional grain or byproduct feeds that would meet some additional calories."

Pros and cons

Larson said calves could add growth from consuming the additional calories. He said the economic value of creep feeding depends on feed costs, calf prices, forage conditions and how much feed is actually converted into additional gain.

"Often it is an economic question, which is the cost of gain," Larson said. "But there are a couple of inefficiencies. One is that sometimes I can get better feed efficiency by weaning the calf and just putting them on this diet, rather than keeping him on forage and milk and a creep feed."

Larson pointed out how there may be unintended consequences.

"The other thing is we have some wildlife predation of the feed," he said. "Raccoons will get fat if the feed is out there all the time. So it really comes down to your system; is this the most economical way to put some gain on calves? Sometimes the answer is yes, but a lot of times, in my opinion and in my spreadsheet, it would be better to go ahead and just wean the calf."

What type of feed is best?

Lancaster said a more effective way to add calories in the cow's diet can be to substitute feed while maintaining a similar amount of foraging.

"Starch feeds like grains have a higher substitution effect on the forge than high fiber type feed," Lancaster said. "Soybean hulls, wheat midds (and) those types of feed will have a lower substitution effect. Don't just throw a bunch of corn out there because you don't want to substitute; you want to supplement if you can."

The full discussion is available on the *Beef Cattle Institute's Cattle Chat podcast*, https://ksubci.org/2026/08/07/brd-around-the-world-and-the-economics-of-creep-feeding/. Send questions by email to bci@ksu.edu.

Cow-Calf Management Considerations for September

For spring-calving cow herds:

- If not already done, make plans for weaning calves.
  - Test your forages and have feedstuffs on hand prior to weaning.
  - Check and clean waterers and prepare weaning/receiving pens.
- Evaluate cow BCS at weaning.
  - Record scores with the BCS Record Book from KSRE!
  - Use BCS to guide the fall nutrition program.
  - Female requirements are lowest at weaning so weight and BCS can be added more easily in early fall rather than waiting until closer to calving.
- Schedule pregnancy checking and fall health work if not already done.
  - How were pregnancy rates relative to last year?
  - Do we need to re-think our fall/winter nutrition program?
- Evaluate the cost of gain relative to the value of gain when making feeding and marketing decisions for cull cows.

For fall-calving cow herds:

- The final 60 days prior to calving represents the last opportunity to add BCS economically.
- Ensure mature cows are ≥ 5.0 and 2–4-year-old females are ≥ 6.0 at calving.
- Review your calving health protocols as needed.
- Have calving equipment cleaned and available to use as needed.
- Plan to adjust your nutrition program to match needs of lactating cows.
- Use the estrus synchronization planner (https://www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrussynch.html) to help plan fall synchronization protocols.

Plan your mineral supplementation for this coming fall and winter.

- Record date and amount offered and calculate herd consumption.
- If consumption is 2X the target intake, then cost will be too!
- If using fly control products, continue to use them until recommended times (based on date of first frost) for your area.
- Risk of grass tetany is greatest for lactating cows. Consider magnesium levels in mineral supplements for cows grazing cool-season forages and winter annuals this fall.

Schedule breeding soundness exams for bulls used for fall service.

- Monitor BCS, particularly on young bulls. If bulls are BCS ≤ 5.0 after summer breeding, consider supplementing to regain BCS going into fall.

Calf Management

- If you are creep feeding spring-born calves, continue to closely monitor intake and calf condition/fleshiness going into the fall until weaning.
- Schedule any pre-weaning vaccination or processing activities if not already done.
- Consider the economic value by implanting nursing fall-born calves and weaned spring-born calves.
- If not already done, schedule your breeding protocols for fall replacement heifers in advance of the breeding season.
  - If synchronizing with MGA, make sure intake is consistent at 0.5 mg of melengestrol acetate per hd per day for 14 days, and remove for 19 days prior to administering prostaglandin.

General Management

- Employ multiple strategies, chemistries for late-season fly/insect control.
- Take inventory of and begin sampling harvested forages for fall feed needs.
  - Use the forage inventory calculator (https://www.agmanager.info/hay-inventory-calculator).
  - Balance forage inventories with fall/winter grazing acres.
- If planning to harvest corn or sorghum silage:
  - Prepare your pile/bunker site and equipment.
  - If using a custom harvester, communicate with them well in advance.
  - Closely monitor whole plant moisture levels.
  - Have silage tarps in place and ready to cover once harvest is complete.
- Use the Management Minder tool on KSUBeef.org, https://www.asi.k-state.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.)
- With high feeder calf prices, consider price risk management tools.

In the Garden: Pick pears now, fertilize strawberries

Two of Kansas gardeners' favored fruits may need attention now as the calendar creeps toward September.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Matt McKernan said pears are typically ready for harvest now through October, depending on the variety.

"Pears left to ripen on the tree may develop a gritty texture," McKernan said. "Harvesting pears at maturity but before peak ripeness, along with a chilling period, can bring out the sweet flavors and a better texture."

McKernan said pears change to a pale green or yellowish-green color when ready for harvest. Some varieties will have brown spots on the skin.

"These spots are the fruits' 'breathing pores,' known as lenticels," he said. "On immature pears, the lenticels are white or greenish-white. Mature fruit will develop a smoother, waxy coating and separate easily from the branch when twisted. There should also be a pear aroma at maturity."

To harvest pears, carefully lift the fruit at an angle and twist. Avoid damaging the twig where it is attached because that may negatively impact fruit development next year.

McKernan said harvested pears will still be quite firm or hard, and should be allowed to finish ripening indoors, in temperatures below 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Refrigerate pears at 31 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit with high humidity (ideally in a perforated bag) for two days to several weeks, depending on the variety and how quickly you plan to use the fruit.

"Remove pears from the cold storage and allow them to sit at 60-65 F for 1-3 weeks to finish ripening," he said. "Fruit may rot instead of ripening if conditions are too warm."

Mid-August is also a good time to give strawberry beds some attention, McKernan said.

"Strawberries should be fertilized to support fruit development next spring," he said. "Sunlight and warm temperatures from June through August promote runners and daughter plant development. As the daylight hours decrease and temperature begins lowering into September and October, fruit buds start to develop, which is why (August) is the best time to fertilize to encourage good fruit set."

Nitrogen can be applied as part of a complete fertilizer (such as 12-12-12) at a rate of ¾ to 1 pound per 25 row feet, according to McKernan.

"Alternatively, urea (46-0-0) can be applied at a rate of ¼ to 1/3 pounds per 25 row feet," he said. "With either type of fertilizer, apply one-half inch of water after fertilizing to dissolve and move the nitrogen into the soi lwhere plant roots can access it."

Compost bin can aid gardening success, says K-State expert

Beginning composting? Kansas State University horticulture expert Matt McKernan recommends using a bin to ensure a successful compost pile.

"A number of things are needed for building a compost pile, including a bin, a source of water, 'green' materials, and 'brown' materials," McKernan said.

Green materials include wet and fresh materials, such as grass clippings, food scraps, weeds, or manure. Brown materials include dry material, such as fallen leaves, sawdust, newspaper, and wood chips.

A bin will help keep all the compost materials packed together and speed up the process, he said. By ensuring the pile is properly constructed, it will also ensure the compost pile generates enough heat to destroy pests and disease organisms.

Choosing the right compost bin is relatively simple. First, McKernan says to ensure the size of the bin is adequate.

"Our goal is to have a bin that will hold at least a 3 X 3 X 3 foot high mound of material," he said. "Anything less than this and the process will be slow and will not produce sufficient heat to kill insect and disease pests."

For home gardeners, McKernan said a 5 x 5 x 5 foot bin is the maximum size that could be easily handled.

Although compost bins can be purchased, they can just as easily be made or repurposed from other materials. McKernan recommends a bin made of discarded pallets or a ring of woven wire.

"If space allows, a three-bin system is ideal," McKernan said. "One bin is used for holding materials until enough have been collected to make a complete compost pile; another bin holds the materials that are actively decomposing; and the third holds finished compost."

McKernan also provided a helpful *YouTube video*, https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/composting-choosing-a-bin, on choosing a compost bin.

VIDEO OF THE WEEK:

When watering the landscape, it is always better to water based on the conditions on your property, rather than by a set schedule. A smart irrigation controller helps to do just that. Smart irrigation controllers increase water efficiency by taking in outside data to make irrigation decisions based on the type of plant being watered, the soil type of the property, and local weather conditions. When paired with rain sensors, soil moisture sensors, solar radiation data, and weather monitors, a smart irrigation controller can become a powerful tool in a healthy and water-wise landscape. *Watch this week's video covers on how to conserve water with smart controllers*, and learn what this technology can do for you: https://youtu.be/TC2VTo4wA4o?si=TcxlHeQDfv-PkoLM

GARDEN CALENDAR:

- Plant leafy greens in the fall garden, including lettuce, mustard, Swiss chard, and bok choy.
- Harvest crops on a regular basis for season long production.
- Check plants for insects such as spider mites and aphids.
- Control black spot and other rose diseases.
- Fertilize mums, hardy asters, and other fall blooming perennials.
- Water tall fescue lawns one to two times per week, applying a total of 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week.
- Start planning for fall lawn renovation projects such as aerating, seeding, and fertilizing.
- Prune and shape hedges one final time before winter.
- Avoid fertilizing ornamental trees and shrubs now so they harden off before winter. Instead, plan to fertilize trees and shrubs as fall color begins to develop later this fall.
- Make houseplant cuttings and repot plants before summer sun slips away.

Planting A Fall Garden To Maximize Vegetable Garden Production:

While tomatoes, okra, peppers, eggplant, sweet potatoes, and many of our vegetable garden crops will continue to grow for several more months, fall is the ideal time to reestablish cool-season crops and leafy greens in the vegetable garden. Fall is an often over looked opportunity for many of these vegetables, with the potential to develop even larger and better flavored harvests than if planted in the spring. Although the potential of the fall garden is great, the appropriate steps need to be taken in advance to prepare for a fall vegetable garden, starting in the early summer.

When establishing a fall vegetable garden, pay close attention to how long it takes the crop to develop and how tolerant the crop is of first frosts or freezes. On most seed labels this will be indicated by days to maturity. For most fall vegetable garden crops, it is important to

allow enough time for crops to mature before the first frost. Although it is difficult to predict an exact date, the average first frost in the fall occurs in mid-October for most of central and eastern Kansas. Further north, frosts may occur a few weeks earlier, while further south may have a few additional weeks before frosts occur.

In order to provide an adequate number of days until maturity, the planting date of crops will vary. Potatoes or cabbage require an extended period of development, thus planting them in mid-July is necessary. Other crops, such as lettuce or radishes, can be planted as late as early September. The later the planting date, the more the temperatures in Kansas begin to cool, and often rainfall becomes more abundant, allowing many leafy greens and cool-season crops to thrive. When to start the fall garden varies greatly depending on the type of crop.

For cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and brussels sprouts, plan to plant transplants outdoors in the garden in late July to early August. This requires purchasing transplants from a local garden center or nursery, or beginning your own seeds indoors in early July. Typically seeds are planted 4 to 6 weeks ahead of transplanting time. With Cole crops, be sure to pay special attention to the days to maturity, as not all varieties will have the time necessary to mature before frost.

For beets, daikon radishes, turnips, and carrots, plan to direct seed into the garden from late July to early August. Many turnip varieties have a short growing season and may be direct seeded even into late August to early September. Seeds will require adequate moisture until they emerge, and a light covering of compost over the seeds may help prevent soil crusting and improve germination.

Lettuces can be direct seeded into the garden in late August or started indoors as transplants, 4 to 6 weeks ahead of time. Most lettuce varieties will tolerate a frost down to about 28°F with minimal damage, which helps to extend the growing season.

For spinach, kale, arugula, bok choy, mizuna, and a wide range of leafy greens, most can be direct seeded into the garden in late August to early September, for harvest in October or November. These leafy greens will grow rapidly, especially as soil and air temperatures cool this fall.

Unfortunately, not all spring planted vegetables are a good fit for the fall garden. Planting peas and Irish potatoes should typically be avoided in the fall. Northern Kansas may have more success with fall grown peas and potatoes, however for much of the state, soil temperatures often remain too warm for fall planted peas and potatoes to do well.

Visit the "Fall Gardens" section (Chapter 8) of the Kansas Garden Guide for more information and tips for fall vegetable garden success:
https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/kansas-garden-guide_S51.pdf#page=71

Chinch Bugs - An Insect Pest of Turfgrass:

Chinch bugs are insect pests of turfgrass, with the common chinch bug (*Blissus leucopterus leucopterus*) the main chinch bug species in the Midwest. Chinch bug nymphs and adults feed on zoysiagrass, Bermudagrass, bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, buffalograss, and fescue grasses. This article discusses the biology, damage, and management of chinch bugs.

Biology: The chinch bug life cycle includes an egg, nymphs, and an adult. The life cycle, from egg to adult, can be completed in approximately one month. Adults are 1/8 of an inch (3.1 millimeters) long, black and gray, with white markings on the body. After mating,

females lay up to 200 eggs over three to five weeks. Nymphs emerge (eclose) from eggs and feed on the leaves (blades) of turfgrass. Young nymphs are red with a yellow band on the front of the body. Older nymphs are black and gray with a white spot on the back. There are five nymphal instars (stages between each molt). After the final instar, chinch bug nymphs become adults, which may live for two to three weeks.

Chinch bugs reside in the thatch layer and areas of the turfgrass that receive full sunlight. Chinch bugs prefer hot and dry conditions because they are susceptible to infection by natural fungi under moist conditions. Chinch bugs overwinter as adults in thatch and debris. There are two generations per year in Kansas.

Damage: Chinch bug nymphs and adults have piercing-sucking mouthparts that are used to remove plant fluids from turfgrass leaves and stems. In addition, they can inject a toxic saliva into plant tissues. Chinch bug feeding results in yellow to brown patches of turfgrass in areas exposed to sunlight, which may be misdiagnosed as drought stress or lack of water. Nymphs and adults typically feed on the edge of the yellow or brown patches of turfgrass. Chinch bug adults resemble big eyed bugs, which are predators. Therefore, be sure to accurately determine that chinch bugs are what is causing damage to the turfgrass.

Management: Management of chinch bugs involves 1) regular irrigation of turfgrass, 2) dethatching rhizomatous turfgrasses, such as zoysiagrass and Bermudagrass, 3) regular monitoring, and 4) applying insecticides if needed. Provide enough water to minimize stress to turfgrass and dethatch every year or two years. Monitor for chinch bugs by taking a coffee can open at both ends, insert into the turfgrass at the edge of the damaged area, and fill the can with water. Chinch bug nymphs and adults will float on the water surface. Five to 10 chinch bugs per square foot may result in damage to turfgrass. However, damage can be minimized by providing proper cultural practices, such as watering, fertility, and dethatching.

Liquid or granular formulations of insecticides can be applied to the turfgrass to maintain chinch bug nymph and adult populations below damaging levels. Always read the label of an insecticide and follow directions accordingly. Timing, coverage, and application frequency can influence the effectiveness of insecticides in killing enough chinch bugs to prevent damage to the turfgrass. After application of an insecticide, irrigate with a 1/2 inch (12.7 milliliters) of water to move the insecticide into the thatch layer where chinch bugs are located. Furthermore, when applying liquid formulations of insecticides, ensure that the water pH is between 5.5 and 6.5 to avoid issues with alkaline hydrolysis, which can reduce the effectiveness of the application.

Fall Webworms:

Fall webworm nests are a common site in Kansas trees this time of year. The white, web-created nests are positioned out near the ends of tree branches and provide a safe haven from which the fall webworm caterpillars feed. Over time, the size of the web gradually increases, as the need for food increases, bringing more attention to this caterpillar pest.

In Kansas, two types of fall webworms are present, the blackheaded webworms and the redheaded webworms. Although each larvae vary in color, both have many tufts of long hair covering their body. Both types of fall webworm produce two generations per year (often overlapping) and are present June through September. The first generation of fall webworm each summer is often small and usually goes unnoticed, while the second generation is much larger and more noticeable.

Fall webworm caterpillars feed on almost all fruit, shade, and ornamental trees in Kansas, with the exception of conifers. Often, this insect is present more on trees that stand alone, rather than trees that are surrounded by other trees.

Fall webworm caterpillars feed for four to six weeks from inside the woven silk nests they construct. In addition to numerous caterpillars, tree leaves, caterpillar moltings, and frass also accumulate within the nests. As larvae mature, they crawl down the tree and spend the winter as pupa in the leaf litter under the tree.

High populations of fall webworm can completely defoliate host plants, but typically do not kill them. However, on pecan trees, nut production and quality can be reduced if webworms are not controlled. On ornamental plants, control is optional.

To control fall webworm, prune out and destroy the infested portions of the branch. This is most effective when webs are still small.

If webs are too high to prune out, caterpillars can also be removed by using a long stick or pole with a nail inserted through the end crosswise to snag individual webs and pull them down. Insert the pole into the web and twist to cause the web to wrap around the pole where it can be removed and destroyed.

Insecticides can also be used for control, but a commercial quality, high-pressure sprayer is needed to penetrate through the webs and reach the caterpillars inside. In most cases insecticides are not warranted, as fall webworm damage is primarily aesthetic, and control is not necessary to protect the health of the tree. If insecticides are used, look for products with the active ingredients spinosad, cyfluthrin, or permethrin.

Visit our Fall Webworm fact sheet for more information on this caterpillar pest and its control: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/common-pest-problems/documents/Fall%20Webworm.pdf. *Matthew McKernan, Consumer Horticulture Extension Associate; Dr. Raymond Cloyd, Professor and Extension Specialist in Horticultural Entomology*

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Plan now…for Christmas? K-State extension agent says 'yes'

In case you haven't glanced at a calendar lately, here's the stark reality: There's just a little over four months to Christmas.

Gulp.

The reality that one of the most joyous – and often busiest -- times of the year is closing in can be a welcome reminder, says Elizabeth Brunscheen-Cartagena, a family life and resource management agent in K-State Extension's Sedgwick County office.

"Four months gives us enough time to plan," Brunscheen-Cartagena said. "By planning, we can avoid over-spending due to the excitement of the season, and thus control our money rather than the season controlling us."

Brunscheen-Cartagena shares points to ponder well in advance of the busy season:

- *Create a budget for gifts.* “Make a list of all the people for whom we plan to give gifts and assign an amount you want to spend,” she said. “Gradually save that money and put it in an envelope with the person’s name on it.” This also gives you time to think through the types of things that the recipient might like.
- *Recognize talents and create gifts for meaningful experiences***.** If a child or other person likes to cook, buy a simple cookbook and the dry ingredients for one of the recipes. If another person likes to paint, gradually buy brushes, paint or a canvas and put it in a decorative bag. Express yourself by making decorative jars with ingredients for a soup mix or hot chocolate recipe.
- *Plan your get-togethers***.** If family is meeting up for holiday cheer, decide on whether there will be a gift exchange involving children, adults or both. Assign chores or dinner responsibilities to different families instead of taking on all the work and cost.
- *Avoid the last-minute rush***.** Decide on gifts in advance so that you can compare prices between stores.

“Planning for the holidays will save us time, money and energy,” Brunscheen-Cartagena said. “At the same time, it will bring us peace of mind, good relationships and a lot of happiness for us and our loved ones, which is the purpose of the holidays.”

“At the same time,” she adds, “it will bring happiness and relaxation for our pocket.”