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## **Stink, Stank, Stunk!**

I will not complain about the weather; I will not complain about the weather! Have to keep telling myself that! Speaking of stink, there was this horrible smell in my kitchen and it took me awhile to detect that it was coming from a sack of potatoes. I'll spare you the gross details, but suffice it to say, there was one rotten potato. Unfortunately, that one rotten, stinking potato was making all the other potatoes stinky and if not removed, they too, surely would rot.

Such is the case, when we have a person that doesn't care for their animals. Whether, it's neglect, abuse or even ignorance. Those "bad" cases put a black eye on all us animal husbandry folks.

So should these stories be buried, for fear of public perception? I don't think so; I think the public/consumers need to know that there is some accountability.

Could these cases, cause undo scrutiny on livestock producers? Sure, I suppose, but these rotten potatoes need to be found and dealt with so that the whole lot doesn't get thrown out.

Cruelty to Animals is considered crimes against the public morals in Kansas. Our state statutes outline cruelty to animals as knowingly killing, injuring, maiming, torturing, burning or mutilating any animal.

It also includes abandoning any animal in a place without provisions, not providing food, water, protection from the elements, no opportunity to exercise and other care that is needed for their health or well-being. It can include knowingly but not maliciously killing or injuring any animal, or administering any poison to any domestic animal.

There are numerous exceptions, for farm animals, rodeo practices and humane euthanasia. It also includes laying down a horse for medical or identification purposes.

And you can still poison coyotes, wolves or other predatory animals. Good to know, except I don't think they still sell those products. Wolves in Kansas?

I'm not sure when this state statute was written, I guess that's a story for another day!

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David G. Hallauer, District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils/Horticulture

### **Conducting a Prescribed Burn**

The ability to use a prescribed burn as part of our forage management is dictated to a large degree by weather. Do we have enough wind to carry a fire, but not so much that its dangerous? Has grass started greening up yet so that it's ready to burn? What about moisture levels. This year, our moisture levels – and the continued presence of snow – may hinder our ability to carry a fire the way we'd like to.

In all likelihood, everything will 'break loose' at one time. The snow will melt. Temperatures will rise. Grass will start to grow – and we'll all want to be burning at the same time. For that burn to be safe and successful, now is the time to get prepared.

The key to keeping a prescribed burn from becoming a wildfire comes in that preparation. That means that right now you should be thinking about what equipment you'll need and preparing the site for a burn that may occur in as little as a few weeks from now on our cool season pastures. Make sure all pumps, hoses, and tanks on firefighting equipment are in good working order. Is your pump properly sized for the flow needed for putting out a fire? Some ATV sprayers may not be. Do pump engines work correctly? Are hoses in good working order? A prescribed burn needs to occur in our very short window of opportunity. Safety should not be compromised and a burn may need to be cancelled if equipment isn't ready.

Ask yourself as you plan – why am I burning? What benefit is this fire going to do for my forage stand or wildlife habitat? Cool season grasses don't tend to respond to fire like warm season prairie grasses do. In fact, if burned too frequently or at the wrong time, stands can be harmed. Further, if you are trying to take out brush or taller cedar trees, do you have enough fuel, and will it be flammable during the appropriate time? If ample fuel loads are not available to burn up small cedar trees, or if burns are being conducted prior to the beginning of regrowth on our brush species (as is often the case with our cool season grasses), control will not be as effective as you'd like. At that point, other management options may better help you achieve your desired objective.

Last, but not least – have you given appropriate attention to safety? Have you obtained the proper permits required by local authorities to conduct the burn? Do you have proper clothing, equipment, and tools to safely spread and quickly put out fires? Do you have a back burn or tilled area or laid out other methods to prevent fire spreading to places you don't want it to? A formal burn plan with efforts coordinated by a burn boss is key to making sure that the burn achieves its desired objective in a manner safe to man, machine, and structure. Much of that effort can be undertaken now so that when it's time to start the prescribed burn, you are ready to go.

Need a burn plan? Your local NRCS Office or Wildlife Biologist can likely help. Our District Extension Offices have numerous resource publications available to help you plan, as well as a video available for checkout if you want to learn some techniques. Contact us if you want to discuss a prescribed burn and whether it's right for you!

Cindy Williams  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Food, Nutrition, Health and Safety

### Steps to Avoid Catching A Cold

Nearly 22 million school days are lost due to the common cold alone. Children have about six to 10 colds a year and adults about two to four, but in families with children in school, the number of colds per child can be as high as 12 a year according to the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Here are some simple steps to help avoid catching a cold:

\*Wash your hands. San Diego Naval Health Center researchers saw a 45 percent decrease in respiratory illnesses in recruits who were instructed to wash their hands at least five times a day.

\*Keep your hands away from your nose and eyes. Your eyes and nose do not have the same protective mechanisms that your mouth does and are where most colds are caught.

\*Get seven-and-a-half to eight hours of sleep each night. The people who only slept four hours a night produced half the number of antibodies than when getting the proper amount.

\*Drink plenty of water. The air is drier inside making our nasal passages drier and harder for our bodies to shed those bacteria and viruses. Using a humidifier is helpful but staying hydrated from the inside is just as important.

\*Go outside—fresh air is healthy air. I am sure you have been told to “bundle up so you don’t catch a cold.” That really isn’t why we catch more colds during the winter. We are just inside more and in close contact with each other.

\*Carry and use your own pen. Don’t use the pen offered at places like the doctor’s office, the bank or restaurants as they have been touched by many others. Viruses and bacteria can live from 20 minutes up to two hours or more on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks and you have a better chance to catch more “germs.”

\*Carry hand sanitizer with you. A recent study showed that families who carried hand sanitizers with them had 59 percent fewer cases of stomach bugs than nonusers.

\*Reduce the stress in your life—go out with friends, talk with your spouse, get a message.

\*Move more. Immune cell function improved 45 percent in adults who were physically active for at least three hours a week.

\*Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and grains. They are packed with antioxidants to help your body fight off colds and flu. If an apple a day doesn’t do it, eat yogurt, fish or chicken soup to help you feel better faster.

Nancy C. Nelson  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

### **Teens need frequent communication with parents to maintain youth resiliency after a divorce**

Sharing research from the university is part of the K-State land-grant mission. This article written by Stephanie Jacques, Kansas State University News and Communications, illustrates this concept.

Texting, FaceTime and other popular communication methods among teens may help build supportive parent-youth relationships after a divorce, according to a Kansas State University family studies researcher.

Mindy Markham, associate professor and associate director for Kansas State University's School of Family Studies and Human Services; Jonathon Beckmeyer at Indiana University; and Jessica Troilo at West Virginia University recently published a study about parent-youth relationships after a divorce in the *Journal of Family Issues*.

The researchers evaluated data from nearly 400 divorced mothers and fathers with a child between 10-18 years old. They identified three types of post-divorce co-parenting relationships — cooperative, moderately engaged and conflictual — and evaluated differences in three key aspects of youth well-being as well as the frequency of communication.

"Parental warmth and closeness, parents' knowledge about their kids and inconsistent discipline didn't differ among three different types of divorced co-parenting relationships," Markham said. "What did make a difference was the contact that the parents had with the youth. Essentially, the more contact that parents had with their kids was better regardless of the parents' relationship with each other."

These findings are contrary to a similar 2008 study, which suggested that divorced co-parenting individuals should be cooperative to maintain children's resiliency to divorce. It also is contrary to the Family Systems Theory — that the quality of a post-divorce relationship spills over to parent-child relationships. According to Markham, these conflicting results may be because older children are more likely to have a cellphone or tablet today and can take a more active role in the parent-child relationship.

"Preteens and teenagers probably have their own devices and are able to text, email or video chat with their nonresidential parent so the child can take more ownership of the relationship," Markham said. "I think frequent communication, whether it is in person or using communication technology, is really critical to making sure that the parent-child contact stays in place."

According to Markham, youth with parents who are warm and supportive have been found to engage in fewer problem behaviors and experience less emotional distress. Also, parents who have great knowledge of their youth's daily lives can respond well to their children's needs and create environments that promote positive youth development. Inconsistent discipline, on the other hand, can lead to youth anxiety, aggression, or threaten a child's sense of security. These three aspects together are critical for youth well-being and may help promote resiliency in youth experiencing parental divorce.

"Parents in a conflictual or disengaged co-parenting relationship with their former spouse who were able to communicate with their child daily or weekly had higher levels of parental knowledge, which makes sense, Markham said. "Parental warmth and support also were higher among parents who had more

frequent contact with their child."

This finding may help divorce education programs refocus on individual parenting skills to strengthen parent-youth relationships instead of stressing cooperative parenting if they do not get along, Markham said. If a child is old enough to have their own device, parents should be able to communicate directly and compartmentalize a stressful relationship with an ex-spouse so it does not negatively affect the parent-child relationship.

"If it is possible for parents to cooperate, obviously that would be ideal, but there are situations where they can't and I think this research is saying you can still have a good parent-child relationship even if the relationship with your ex can't work," Markham said.