

Jody G. Holthaus
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Livestock and Natural Resources

Confined Cow Calf Operations

This topic seems to be getting a lot more interest lately. There have been some articles in the farm press highlighting some producers around Kansas that are giving this a try. The main reason, is the lack of pasture, lack of expansion opportunities and weather!

Next week I will be visiting some of these operations to interview them and take some virtual tours to share at the Beef Issues Group meeting later in the month.

I'm teaming up with Will Boyer our Water Quality Specialist to discuss these operations and Will has a drone that we can get some cool overhead shots! This should be fun!

If you'd like to see what we come up with, join us for the Beef Issues Group meeting on February 28th at 7 pm at the Glacial Hills Resource center, 913 Dakota in Sabetha.

So just a few things about confined raising cows with their calves. Cows require between 125 and 700 square feet of pen space. Smaller cows weighing 1000 to 1200 pounds can get by with 125 square feet in dry conditions and 250 square feet during wet conditions. Keeping pairs together requires more pen space. Start with a minimum of 400 square feet per pair in lots that are dry and add space as calves grow. Regardless of feeder or bunk type, each cow needs 24 to 30 inches of bunk space, horned cattle need even more. Fences should be sturdy enough to withstand a mature cow rubbing and reaching under the fence for grass.

Regardless of facilities, water is the main concern because it is the number one nutrient for cattle. Each cow consumes 15 to 20 gallons per day. You must be able to provide a continuous supply of water for the number of animals in the pen. During the summer, water consumption usually peaks in early afternoon.

If using dry lots, portable bunks can be added to provide enough space. Shade has to be provided to minimize heat stress. Plan on 20 to 25 square feet of shade per head, place the shade in the middle of the pen for continuous protection throughout the day.

Cattle should be sorted into uniform groups by weight, size, age or body condition. Age is important so the bossy older cows won't intimidate younger cows. Sorting by body condition score enables you to offer different diets based on the goal of increasing, decreasing or maintaining body condition. Sorting increases the efficiency of the operation.

Feeding programs can be limit fed, or full fed. I'm excited to learn more about confined cow/calf operations and how they are working. I will be visiting three different operations that are using Hoop buildings and outside lots. Stay tuned!

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

Crop Disease Management Meeting – February 27th

The challenges of managing diseases in corn and soybean production systems are many. Disease identification isn't always straightforward. Not knowing isn't an option – no sense in treating a bacterial disease with a fungicide, right? If a fungicide is applied, which product and when? That's just for foliar diseases. Seedling diseases can be complicated as well.

To assist with navigating the varying disease challenges we see on an annual basis, our annual Meadowlark Extension District – Atchison County crops meeting will this year focus on the topic of disease management for the corn and soybean producer. Wednesday, February 27th is the date. The Knights of Columbus Hall in Nortonville is the place.

We'll start with a catered breakfast at 7:45 a.m. courtesy of our generous sponsors. At 8:30, we'll kick off with the first of two presentations by long time K-State Research & Extension Plant Pathologist Dr. Doug Jardine. He'll talk soybean diseases, with a focus on identification of foliar diseases, share observations on the seed diseases we saw in 2018, and discuss soybean cyst management.

Kansas River Valley Experiment Field manager Eric Adee will be up next. He'll discuss research done by himself and others at the experiment fields dealing with corn and soybean disease management, including his work on the use of fungicides for the control of southern rust in corn. We'll wrap up the morning with more on corn diseases from Doug Jardine, discussing some of the new diseases we're starting to observe in our area. The morning will be wrapped up so you can be on your way around 10:30 a.m.

The breakfast is complementary, but an RSVP is requested so we can make sure we have enough food. Please do so by noon on Monday February 25th to the Oskaloosa Office of the Meadowlark Extension District at (785) 863-2212. You can also register via e-mail to me at dhallaue@ksu.edu.

A Good Time for Landscape Design

Winter landscape design projects are good for a number of reasons. First, what else are you going to do when it's below freezing and the wind is howling? Second, the mere thought of a blossoming landscape definitely takes a little of the edge off of short days and cold nights. Third: planning ahead is always a good idea so you can get things off to a good start.

K-State Research and Extension has a number of online publications to help you get off to that good start. Publications like *Residential Landscape Design*, *Naturalistic Landscaping* and *Low-Maintenance Landscaping* are for download online at <http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/publications/landscaping.html>. Rather have a printed copy? Contact your District Office to request one.

Need information on plants recommended for Kansas? The list can be found online as well at <http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/recommended-plants/index.html>.

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

Dark Chocolate and Cocoa—Healthy Treat in Moderation

It's February. Stores are brimming with red and pink hearts, roses, romantic cards, and of course chocolate! To many of us, the amount of chocolate everywhere can be dis-heartening as we are still on January's quest for health. Have no fear, health-minded friends—it is proven that chocolate, dark chocolate and cocoa that is, may actually benefit our health when consumed in moderation.

Dark chocolate and cocoa contain a greater amount of plant-based nutrients, or phytonutrients, called flavanols than do other forms of chocolate. In fact, these compounds have a bitter flavor and give the darker chocolate and straight cocoa their characteristic taste.

Past research has indicated that cocoa flavanols help in heart health; more recent research expands those findings to possible brain health benefits. In both cases, the phytonutrients, “positively affect the circulatory system and help maintain the flexibility of the arteries,” according to the November 2013 issue of Tufts University of Nutrition and Health Letter. In one study, the researchers found that older adults with hypertension and/or diabetes drinking two cups of cocoa each day for a month improved in both brain function and increased blood flow to the brain. Researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston found that for a small group of subjects with impaired functions, average age 73, increased daily intake of cocoa improved their cognitive skills significantly.

So does this mean to eat a box of chocolates for good health every day? Unfortunately, no. But moderate quantities of dark chocolate or cocoa may be beneficial for some. Although there is no recommended amount that has been suggested by the research, those in the field propose limiting consumption to about 1-ounce per day. For example, that along with the flavanol-packed cocoa in the candy or hot drink, typically there is also a good bit of fat, sugar, and other less healthy components.

Choose darker types of chocolate (70% cocoa or higher) for heart and brain health benefits. And while you are at it, continue to make other heart-healthy choices including selecting low-fat or non-fat dairy foods and lean meats and getting plenty of fruits and vegetables daily—try melting your ounce of dark chocolate on strawberries, raspberries or bananas for a heart-healthy dessert!

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

What to Know About Measles

In the 10 years before a measles vaccine was available in 1963, nearly all children got measles by 15 years old. Each year, 3 to 4 million people in the U.S. were infected, about 400-500 people died, 48,000 hospitalized, & 1,000 suffered encephalitis (swelling of the brain) from measles.

In 2000, the United States declared that measles was eliminated from this country. The U.S. eliminated measles because it has a highly effective measles vaccine, a strong vaccination program that achieves high vaccine coverage in children, and a strong public health system for detecting and responding to measles cases and outbreaks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines measles elimination as the absence of continuous disease transmission for 12 months or more in a specific geographic area.

If measles is eliminated, why do people still get it in the United States? Every year, unvaccinated travelers, American or international visitors, get measles while they are in other countries and bring measles in to the United States. They can spread measles to other people who are not protected against measles, which sometimes leads to outbreaks. This can occur in communities with unvaccinated people.

Measles is highly contagious, so anyone who is not protected against measles is at risk of getting the disease. People who are unvaccinated for any reason, including those who refuse vaccination, risk getting infected with measles and spreading it to others. They may spread measles to people who cannot get vaccinated because they are too young or have specific health conditions.

CDC considers you protected from measles if you have written documentation (records) showing at least one of the following:

You received two doses of measles-containing vaccine, and you are a school-aged child (grades K-12) or an adult who will be in a setting that poses a high risk for measles transmission, including students at post-high school education institutions, healthcare personnel, and international travelers.

You received one dose of measles-containing vaccine, and you are a preschool-aged child or an adult who will not be in a high-risk setting for measles transmission.

A laboratory confirmed that you had measles at some point in your life.

A laboratory confirmed that you are immune to measles.

You were born before 1957.

Vaccines are one of the top public health achievements because they have reduced or even eliminated many diseases.