

March 8, 2019

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No news from Jody this week

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

Fertility Management of Cool Season Forages

January, February, and early March *always* give us a fertilization window for our cool season forage species. Except for 2019, that is. Mother Nature is working overtime this spring to keep field work at bay, and that means that some of our brome and fescue hay fields or pastures have yet to receive fertilizer. What's that mean for 2019 forage production?

For starters, let's not disregard the effect that weather will have on this year's crop. 2018 served as a great example of what happens when we go directly from winter to summer. Cool season grasses prefer temperatures ranging from the 40's to the mid-70's. Optimum growth occurs in that window. If the time frame for growth in that temperature window is reduced, growth may be compromised as well. When temperatures consistently reach the upper end of that temperature spectrum, cool season species tend to move towards reproduction, reducing the vegetative growth we prefer for higher yields. Fertilizer rate/timing/etc... won't change what conditions our weather from this point provides us.

Research in Kansas indicates that good yields can occur from fertilizer applications even in to late March or early April. Again, temperature has a lot to do with how well that holds true, but in general, even later fertilizer applications can result in good yields. That said, the highest yields generally result from fall applications over spring. Fall applications of nitrogen and phosphorous stimulate root growth and produce more tiller buds that result in more stems (and higher yields) the following spring. Spring applications might result in an increased protein level (if harvest is timely), but yields are generally lower when compared to fall applications.

While we're on the topic of fertility, production losses tend to be 'blamed' on the nitrogen component of the fertility program, when other nutrients may well be the culprit. Cool season forages require about 12 pounds of phosphorous and around 40 pounds of potassium per ton of hay per acre. Soil test results would suggest that phosphorous has been deficient in many of our hay stands for years with potassium becoming a greater concern. Don't forget these important nutrients as well.

While there's reason to be *concerned* about the window of opportunity we have for applying fertilizer to our cool season grass stands, there's no need to panic – yet. Think of your forage production potential as a wooden barrel with every stave of that barrel representing the factors affecting production. Temperature, water, nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, cutting height, harvest timing, etc... are all staves of that barrel. If any one of them is compromised (and we haven't even discussed pH levels...or weed control...or...), forage production can be sacrificed as well. Our best bet at this point is to do the best we can to continue to implement best management practices so that we can optimize production as we move forward.

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

Shape Up Your Snacks

March is National Nutrition Month! What a great time for you and your family to focus on a few healthy eating habits. Here are some tips to help you enjoy some tasty AND healthy snacks and add more vegetables to your diet.

Appeal to their eyes. Veggies will score big with your family when they are enticing and available. Chop vegetables into bite-size pieces for easy eating. Set out two or three colors of vegetables, such as carrots, cauliflower, radishes, celery, tomatoes, cucumbers or broccoli, for a beautiful display. For a special treat, serve with a dip of guacamole of plain fat-free yogurt mixed with low-fat Ranch dressing.

Sneaky snacks. Homemade muffins can be a great way to sneak in some extra vegetables, or fruits, and also get a healthy dose of whole grains. If desired, choose to add grated vegetables, such as carrots or zucchini (or chopped fruit, such as bananas, apples or raisins) for great taste and extra nutrition.

Make it fun. Create “ants on a log” with your child by spreading celery sticks with peanut butter. Top with raisins. Or make “cucumber boats” together. Halve a large cucumber lengthwise. Mix together ½ cup plain fat-free yogurt with a pinch of sugar. Spread the mixture into the “boats.” Top with two toothpicks speared with ‘sails’ of cucumber peelings.

Add something unexpected. Homemade kale chips and sweet potato fries are another way to bring great taste to the table. For kale chips, drizzle clean bite-sized leaves with cooking oil, then sprinkle with garlic powder and ground black pepper. Bake on a pan in a single layer at 350°F for 10-15 minutes. For sweet potatoes into strips. Toss with cooking oil, garlic powder and ground black pepper. Bake on a pan in a single layer at 450°F for 15 to 20 minutes.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Laundry Room Checklist

Organizing your laundry room not only keeps it looking clean, it is one quick and easy way to keep you and your family safe. Use this checklist from the American Cleaning Institute® when you are organizing your laundry room, doing spring cleaning or just need a quick review of safety tips.

Storing Products. Our laundry products are kept out of the reach of our children and pets. Our products are in their original containers, with their labels intact. After we use products, they are immediately closed and put away in their appropriate storage location.

Using Products. We make a conscious effort to do laundry without any distractions because we give it our full attention. When doing laundry, we follow all recommended product instructions, and pay close attention to all “Caution,” “Warning,” “Danger,” or “Poison” statements. We clean up any spills immediately after they occur. We do not combine laundry detergents with other cleaning products.

Following Product Use. We do not use containers of empty detergent to store any other materials. After we finish doing laundry, we always wash our hands as well as all items used to dispense or measure products. We always recycle empty laundry containers when possible or dispose of them properly.

Always read product safety information on the package so that you know what to do before accidents happen. Laundry product labels contain first aid information and are a valuable resource for consumers. Read and follow all recommended instructions on the product label prior to use.

Make it a point to keep the Poison Control Center phone number handy. It is 1-800-222-1222.

Questions about laundry products? Call the manufacturer using the toll free number on the product label or visit their website for more information.