

Jody G. Holthaus
District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

A Whole Lotta Hoopla

So the participants of our Beef Issues Group, suggested we have a session on Confined beef cows and limit feeding. I made some contacts and was fortunate to get in touch with Jason Eickman and Rodney Parsons. They graciously agreed to let us come out and take some pictures and videos of their hoop barns. Will Boyer was going to bring his drone, and this was shaping up to be something really cool.

Did I say cool? Mother Nature did not play nice with us, and our scheduled days kept getting postponed, put off, and rescheduled. I got to the point, that it had to be done, in order to have something to show at the meeting. The days of filming were cold, in the 20's, but the wind chills I don't even want to know!

Both of these operations have cow/calves in hoop barns, different companies, different designs and different sizes. It was really quite interesting.

I'm always curious about animal behavior. Of course, both claim their animals are more docile. This makes sense, because of the daily interactions with humans and close up. The animals had plenty of room, they were doing quite well. They have to walk maybe 50 feet to feed and water, no mud, with nice bedding to lay down in. They did note that the calves will "rob" other mothers, so they might "jug" up the pair to get them to bond for a few days.

The cattle in the barns were sorted by age and body condition score. Age is important in limit feeding cows because of the younger cows typically are less aggressive than the older cows. When you sort by Body condition score, it enables you to offer different diets based on the goal of increasing, decreasing or maintaining body condition score.

Limit feeding makes bunk management easier, because all feed is consumed daily, eliminating the need to clean out bunks. Another benefit is that with less feed consumed and greater feed efficiency, cows produce less manure, which reduces feed and manure handling costs. Lower feed intake also means cows produce less heat, which helps minimize heat stress.

Some disadvantages are weather fluctuations, machine malfunctions and thin cows. Limit fed cows produce less heat, so consider increasing feed by 10% during the winter to provide enough feed. Of course, if you have feeding equipment breakdown, you need to have a plan B to have feed delivered in a timely manner.

Hoop barns may be a way to retain cows when pasture is depleted, increase feed efficiency and reduce production costs. It still takes considerable land resources to raise the feeds and provide the bedding.

With winters like the current one, the hoop barns seem very attractive!!

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

Pruning Deciduous Shrubs

With snow (and ice...) on the ground, it's tough to think about outdoor spring gardening chores. Things could change quickly, however, and if we're not prepared, it's easy to get behind. If you are looking for one chore that can get checked off sooner than later, consider pruning deciduous shrubs. It isn't difficult if you follow a few rules of thumb.

Start by determining the type of shrub you have and separate them in to one of three categories: spring flowering on wood produced last year, those that flower later in the year on current seasons' growth, and those that produce flowers, but with little ornamental value.

Prune the early spring flowering group immediately after flowering. Pruning now won't hurt, but it can reduce flowering. Examples might include forsythia, lilac and mock orange. The other two groups – those that flower on current seasons' growth and those with flowers of little ornamental value - are best pruned in late winter/early spring. This would include Rose-of-Sharon, pyracantha, Bumald spirea and Japanese spirea.

Second, think about pruning according to three basic methods.

Thinning takes a shrub that is too dense and thins it out by removing inward growing twigs, cutting them back to a larger branch or cutting back to just above an outward facing bud. If the stem has a multi-stemmed growth habit, the oldest canes can be removed completely. Heading back is removal of the end of a branch by cutting it back to a bud. This is used to reduce the height of a shrub or to keep it compact. Avoid cutting back to a uniform height as this may result in flush of unattractive growth at the tips of the cut area.

If you have multi-stemmed shrubs that are overgrown with too many older branches to justify saving young canes, consider rejuvenation pruning. This is where all stems are cut back to three to five inch stubs. This is not recommended for all shrubs but can work for spirea, forsythia, pyracantha, ninebark, little leaf mock orange, shrub roses and flowering quince.

You don't have to go crazy, but there's no need to be afraid of pruning. Spring pruning allows wounds to heal quickly without threat from insects or disease. Avoid the use of pruning cut treatments, as they may slow healing. For a guide to help direct your pruning work (with diagrams), check out K-State Research & Extension publication: Pruning Shrubs, available in your District Office or online at: <https://bookstore.ksre.k-state.edu/pubs/MF2998.pdf> .

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

Sitting is the New Smoking; Break the Nasty Habit

Bad news, folks. Recent reports claim that sitting is the new smoking. But K-State Research and Extension just might have the intervention that will help you quit.

Studies show that it doesn't matter how active you are. If you sit for more than an hour at a time, you are jeopardizing your health and affecting your longevity. This is not good news for our society because we sit—a lot! But our bodies aren't designed for sitting. They're designed for standing and moving. Yet over 90% of our activities (working, driving, technology, eating and watching television) encourage us to sit for hours on end, and most of us spend about 80% of our waking hours sitting.

The body will adjust itself to support whatever activity you perform the most, and if 80% of our activities are sedentary then the body will conform to that position. And when the body's mass is being supported by a chair instead of being challenged by gravity, it will lose flexibility and strength, and this of course leads to physical ailments and disease because we just simply weren't designed to be sedentary. It's no wonder we have horrible health statistics.

Many Americans will blame this on the need to sit to do work at their “desk job”. But even folks who've retired will often get into routines that are more sedentary than when they worked. Simply standing more (for 15 minutes within each hour) can interrupt this negative trend. But I think the bigger issue is inertia. Remember that concept from junior high science class? Inertia says an object in motion tends to stay in motion while an object at rest tends to stay at rest. And the only way to get an object to go from rest to motion is by some interrupting force. This is where Extension's intervention comes in: keep reading.

Have you noticed that while it's really hard to develop a certain habit, once you have that habit it's even harder to break it? That's inertia working. I've noticed this in my own observations of active and inactive individuals. People who are inactive have not trouble being inactive for long stretches of time. But if you spend time with an active person, being still for too long is almost painful for them. I've been in meetings where folks, after an hour or so, have to stand because they've been sitting too long. This is inertia. And it's also why it's so hard for folks to go from being inactive to active. They need an interrupting force to get them going. It's not easy. It takes more effort to get going than it does to maintain the go. And getting started is the hardest part.

To help encourage you to be more active, I encourage you to join a Walk Kansas team. Walk Kansas is an 8-week healthy lifestyle challenge that will begin on March 17 and runs until May 11. Members are on teams of six and need to register before March 15th. Cost is \$8.00 per participant and registrations are on-line at www.walkkansas.org or by contacting your local K-State Research and Extension Office. In the Meadowlark District, we have offices in Oskaloosa-785-863-2212; Holton-785-364-4125; or Seneca-785-336-2184. For more information, contact one of these offices.

So start your journey towards a more active, healthier lifestyle and this spring celebrate healthy living by joining Walk Kansas. You will be glad that you did!

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Walk Kansas starts March 17

[Walk Kansas](#) is an eight-week team-based program, sponsored by K-State Research and Extension, which this year runs March 17 - May 11.

Joining forces with friends and forming a team is motivating. Have fun naming your team and pushing each other to cover the distance.

Participants will learn about the 8 Wonders of Kansas as they log the minutes they've walked each week. The 8 Wonders include such places as the Kansas Cosmosphere, Monument Rock and Castle Rocks, and the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and the Flint Hills. These places were identified through a contest series organized by the Kansas Sampler Foundation to inspire awareness of the beauty and value in Kansas, and to encourage travel.

Walk Kansas participants don't actually walk to those places, but as they log the minutes online that they've walked in their own neighborhoods, they learn about those iconic sites around Kansas.

"The program is for all fitness levels," says Sharolyn Jackson, state program coordinator. "Whether you never walk around the block or your idea of a great afternoon is a three-mile hike, this program helps you work toward or maintain a healthy lifestyle. Plus, it can connect you with friends, colleagues at work, or family members as you log miles as part of a six-person team."

Through the eight weeks, participants receive a weekly e-newsletter with tips on healthy eating, strength training, mental and physical well-being and recipes. The Walk Kansas website has information about converting such activities as swimming, bicycling and dancing to miles, for those who prefer other activities to walking. The idea is just to get moving and keep moving.

State of Kansas employees can earn four Health Quest credits for participating in the program.

More information is available online <http://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/walk-kansas> or by contacting your local Meadowlark Extension District Office in Seneca, Holton, or Oskaloosa.