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Livestock and Natural Resources

Pioneer Spirit

I spent the better part of last week at a Range Beef Cow Symposium in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. It's very different country out there and humbled me to know, I don't know a lot about Sugar Beets. It was harvest time, I guess. I will be researching details on that!

Driving through that country, you start to imagine what it must have been like for the pioneers going through those long vast landscapes. As they reached Chimney Rock, outside of Scottsbluff, that was the half-way mark for the Oregon Trail wagon train. It also signaled the start of the hardest part of the journey through the Rocky Mountains.

If you have that "pioneer" spirit, a willingness to endure hardship in order to explore new places or try out new things, then you might have tried some of the low stress cattle handling techniques.

Some of the ideas and concepts are opposite of what some have been trained to do. First of all, work with new cattle daily during the first few days. This will build trust and lead to a more positive working process.

Eliminate loud noises, use a calm, cool approach with animals (and each other!) and this will get a more positive response.

Use the point of balance, that spot on the cow which can make them stop, turn or go. Some call this the pressure zone or flight zone. Using this natural instinct you can make them go where you want them to go. The handler's position, posture and movement all determine what cattle do in our presence. Their movements are up to us!

Keep Control! Low pressure doesn't mean that you're not in control, clear consistent communication allows animals to relax.

So if you have that over anxious family member that is rushing to get the cattle worked, you need to get them under control before you start!

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

2018 Farm Bill Resources

While the 2018 Farm Bill won't be a great deal different than the last bill we worked with in 2014, the factors that led to your 2014 choices may be significantly different this time around. That means a little 'review' might be in order.

For starters, the same programs will be available this time around as last: Agricultural Risk Coverage at the County Level (ARC-CO) and the Individual Level (ARC-IC) as well as Price Loss Coverage (PLC). In short, the PLC is a price protection only program, with payments depending on a national commodity price, and not related to actual yields. The ARC programs offer revenue protection, using prices and yields (at the county level for ARC-CO and the whole farm level for ARC-IC). Both will have advantages/disadvantages in certain situations.

To help you evaluate the programs, the KSU Department of Agricultural Economics has dedicated a portion of their [AgManager.info](http://www.agmanager.info) website to 2018 Farm Bill resources only. It can be found at: <http://www.agmanager.info/ag-policy/2018-farm-bill> . In addition to a paper on frequently asked questions you might have, the site also offers two spreadsheet tools that may be of value to you as you start the evaluation process.

The first is called *Historical ARC/PLC Payments by County*. This spreadsheet is designed to let you take a look back to see what types of payments were made and under what conditions. With the current Farm Bill essentially extending the major programs of the last one, this is a great tool to see what historically worked – and maybe what did not.

The second is named *Tradeoff Between 2019/2020 ARC and PLC*. As the name implies, it allows you to show where the two programs may pay – and where they may not.

A third decision spreadsheet tool is coming – but it's not available yet. When it is available, you can find it at www.agmanager.info under the Ag Policy tab and 2018 Farm Bill.

What's the right program? There are a lot of factors that determine that. As you start the evaluation process, check out these online tools. If you need more information on how to use them, feel free to get in touch with me via any of our District Extension Offices or via e-mail to dhallaue@ksu.edu .

Winterizing Strawberry Plants

Did you know: if temperatures suddenly plummet below 20 degrees F before strawberry plants harden to the cold, they can be severely damaged. A drop to 15 degrees F may kill them. Yet, a strawberry plant properly hardened off can withstand such temperatures with ease.

Winterization of strawberries serves two purposes. Low temperature damage is the obvious one. What we often don't think about, however, is damage that occurs from heaving. Heaving damage occurs when the alternate freezing and thawing pushes plants out of the ground. Once plants are out of the ground and roots are exposed, plants die from lack of water.

Mulching options vary, but (clean) wheat straw is one of the best. Spread the straw over the plants to a depth of three inches, making sure that there are no large or compressed chunks. This should help in the winter plus provide a little protection from late spring frosts. Remove mulch gradually (just enough so leaves can be seen) in the spring as plants begin new growth.

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

Outsmart Your Cravings!

We all crave certain foods from time to time. The psychology behind cravings shows that hormones, memories and other triggers create a sensory signal of craving food. This intensifies with hunger or dieting.

So how can you outsmart these cravings? Here are some tips.

- Take a walk! Some sort of physical activity can redirect your craving, thus putting mind over matter.
- Your nose picks on food odors, so try smelling a nonfood, such as a scented candle, to redirect your brain.
- You've heard the saying, "my eyes were bigger than my stomach." So keep healthful snacks in your vision.
- Do you crave sweets? Grab naturally sweet fruit to curb that craving.
- Thanksgiving and the holidays are about comfort food. Enjoy in moderation, smaller portions, or do a healthier makeover to classic recipes.

The Power of Sleep

We all have trouble sleeping from time to time, but when insomnia persists day after day, it can become a real problem. Beyond making one tired and moody, a lack of sleep can have serious effects on our health, increasing our propensity for obesity, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes.

So What Causes Sleep Issues?

- **Poor Sleep Habits.** An irregular bedtime, frequent naps, late-night activities, or weekend sleeping-in can scramble your body's normal sleep/wake schedules.
- **Emotional Stress.** Emotional stress accounts for more than 50% of chronic sleep problems.
- **Diet and Exercise Habits.** Alcohol or caffeine near bedtime can have negative effects on one's sleeping patterns. A large meal or strenuous exercise close to bedtime can temporarily boost the body's metabolism, chasing away sleep.

Before turning to other options, try some of these tips to help you get a better night's sleep.

1. **Exercise.** "Exercise boosts the effect of natural sleep hormones such as melatonin," says Dr. Karen Carlson, associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. Carlson suggests a morning workout is ideal. Exposing yourself to bright daylight first thing in the morning will help the natural circadian rhythm.
2. **Ambiance matters.** Noise, light, excessive heat or cold, drafts, the air that's too humid or too dry, all can prevent sleep.
3. **Start a sleep ritual.** Just like routine was so important to your child's evening sleep habits, the same goes for adults. "Rituals help signal the body and mind that it's going to be time for sleep," explains Dr. Carlson. Drink a glass of warm milk, take a bath, listen to calming music or read a good book for pleasure to unwind before. Avoid television or your phone.
4. **De-stress.** Worries can manifest when you are finally trying to rest. This stress is a stimulus that fights your efforts to sleep. Before winding down, deal with these worries first. Try writing out concerns and what actions can be taken. Plan a little bit for the next day. Then start relaxing, try some deep breathing exercises.
5. **Try and then take a break.** Rather than trying harder and harder to fall asleep during a poor night, turn on the light and try doing something else for a while. This can decrease frustration and tension about being unable to sleep.

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Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

No news from Nancy this week