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Livestock and Natural Resources

### Time for the Big 'O'

It's that time of year when we start seeing cows and heifers with "O" painted on them. The "O" has been drawn on them as they showed OPEN on preg checking day. While no one likes to see these cows "go to town" if a calf is not going to be born and weaned the next year, she must be marketed in order to pay the feed bills. The earlier open cows are identified; the more savings are seen on winter feed costs for the main herd. Open cows don't always mean money is lost, with a marketing plan that is implemented soon enough, open cows may still provide some profit going into winter.

There are lots of decisions to make, first of all, do you sell the open cows right away, do you intensively feed them for a period of time before you sell, or do you throw them into a fall breeding herd and market to a fall calving operation? The seasonal low for open/cull/market cow sales occurs in late fall to early winter. Therefore, in order to increase profit potential, try to identify and sell open cows before October or design a feeding plan that will add weight and set them up for sale after February.

Figure out your breakeven price. Start by outlining what cows are worth today, what it will cost to feed cows for a few months and what she will weigh when sold. This will give you an idea of where the price needs to be to cover the cost of feeding her and hopefully make a profit.

+Estimated price October 2019 @ \$.45X1250= \$562.50

+Estimated ADG and feed cost 3 lbs./day for 90 days @ \$1.50/d=270 lbs. and \$135

+\$562.50 +\$135=\$697.50/1520 lbs. = \$.46/lb.

+ Estimated breakeven price in February 2020 @ 1520 lbs.= \$.46/lb.

According to the Economic Research Service (ERS) Livestock, Dairy and Poultry Outlook for October 2019, the forecasted average price for the first quarter of 2020 will be \$.54/lb.

Depending on the desired body weight and condition to be added to the cow prior to sale, different feeding regimens can be implemented. Consider cost of feedstuffs and availability of those over the feeding period. Thin cows will need to go on a high energy ration to begin increase in body condition, external fat, intramuscular fat and tenderness at a more efficient rate. Move them from a forage based diet to the high energy diet over a period of days to prevent acidosis. Slowly moving up the energy over two to three weeks for higher daily gains.

With cull/market cow generating 15-25% of the revenue in a cow/calf enterprise, it is critical to market them wisely and try to make a profit. The best plan comes from doing the homework and make a plan for your operation. Talk to your vet about a high powered implant to make gain even better.

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

### Advantages to Fall Weed Control

While weather has a lot to do with what works from year to year when it comes to field crop weed management, most weed scientists strongly recommend fall weed control programs for our more troublesome weeds like henbit and marestail. How much value do they really have?

A University of Missouri study found that fall removal of winter annual weeds via herbicide applications resulted in higher spring soil temperatures than areas with dense winter annual weed infestations. Removal of the winter annuals resulted in soil temperatures as much as five degrees higher in corn and up to eight degrees higher in soybeans. When it comes to emergence next spring, those temperature differences could be huge.

Available moisture was also an issue. The presence of a dense cover of winter annual weeds resulted in soil moisture levels as much as thirteen percent lower in corn and six percent lower in soybeans as compared to clean check strips.

KSU studies (across 14 sites) have shown that the average nitrogen uptake from winter annual weeds was about 16 pounds per acre. In addition to pure nutrient losses, they also found delaying the removal of winter annuals until spring reduced N uptake in developing corn plants.

Believe it or not, soybean cyst nematode (SCN) levels can even be affected by the presence or absence of a fall weed control program. Henbit has been found to be a strong host for SCN, providing an opportunity for SCN levels to continue to grow. Pennycress is considered a moderate host. Shepherd's purse and common chickweed are weak hosts. We have them all and they may be compounding the fight you are already in to manage soil SCN levels.

Finally, the Missouri work also found that winter annual weeds serve as alternative hosts for corn pests like flea beetles and some Lepidopteran insects. In soybeans, removal of winter annuals in the fall reduced total insect populations ten-fold soon after soybean planting as compared to areas where winter annuals were left until seven days prior to planting.

Who knows what this fall will bring. If the rest of the year has been an indicator, a fall weed control strategy may not be an option. If it is, the benefits are greater than simply getting rid of weeds. Fortunately, lots of options are available. For the most recent recommendations from KSU Weed Management Specialist Dr. Dallas Peterson, see the latest KSU eUpdate online at [https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr\\_social/article/control-annual-weeds-with-fall-applied-herbicides-ahead-of-corn-and-sorghum-358-1](https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/article/control-annual-weeds-with-fall-applied-herbicides-ahead-of-corn-and-sorghum-358-1).

### *Time to Clean Up*

If cleaning up your perennial garden isn't on the to-do list, now is the time to add it. Most perennials can be clear cut to remove dead stems to help control insect and disease problems, but there are a few exceptions to consider.

If you want a little 'structure' consider leaving the ornamental grasses (in areas away from structures that aren't posing a fire hazard, that is...). For color, you should also leave evergreens or semi-evergreens. Ferns are usually a little more tender in nature. Leave foliage on them to help ensure overwintering of plant crowns. If the perennials have seed heads and you want to leave them for seed for birds, that's an option as well.

If none of the above apply, the dead stems of the dormant perennial can be removed now.

October25, 2019

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

Cindy is out of the office until later this afternoon. If she returns before 2 pm I will send in her news.

Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

### Food Safety Tips for Fall Outings

Headed to a farm to select the perfect pumpkins or apples? Planning to attend a fall festival or fair and try the foods and beverages available? Remember that food safety practices should be the same at farm stands and festivals as they are in restaurants and at home.

There are always fun things to see and experience at festivals including art work, music, games, and rides. One of the biggest draws to these events is the many different types of foods and drinks available.

Remember that food safety practices are the same at festivals as they are at restaurants and at home: Clean – wash your hands, separate – don't cross contaminate, cook to the right temperature, and chill – refrigerate promptly.

What should you consider before buying food from a vendor? Does the vendor have a clean/tidy workstation? Does the vendor have a sink for employees to wash their hands? Do the employees wear gloves or use tongs when handling food? Does the vendor have refrigeration on site for raw ingredients or pre-cooked foods?

Certain foods, including meat, poultry, and fish need to be cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful germs that may be present.

What other steps can you take to protect you and your family? Wash hands often. Find out where hand washing stations are located. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. Always wash hands after using the restroom, after playing a game or going on a ride, before eating and drinking, after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet, and after removing soiled clothes or shoes. Bring hand sanitizers or disposable wipes in case there aren't any places to wash your hands.