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Livestock and Natural Resources

BC –Before Corona

Back in BC-before Corona, I was busy making plans for our summer Range and Pasture programs. That came to a screeching halt. I also would stop by the grocery store a couple of times a week, a symptom of working in town. BC, you would hop in the car and go hither and there, and now you need to stop and think if it's "essential" or not. What a crazy world we are living in now. I saw this online and thought I would share:

They ran to the groceries, they filled up their carts,
They emptied the Tops and Price Chopper and Walmart,
They panicked and fought and then panicked some more,
Then they rushed to their homes and they locked all the doors.
The food will be gone! The milk eggs and cheese!
The yogurt! The apples! The green beans and peas!
The stores have run out, now what will we do?
They'll be starving and looting and nothing to do!
Then they paused, and they listened a moment or two.
And they did hear a sound, rising over the fear,
It started out far, then began to grow near.
But this sound wasn't sad, nor was it new,
The farms were still doing what farms always do.
The food was still coming, though they'd emptied the shelves,
The farms kept it coming, though they struggled themselves,
Though the cities had forgotten from where their food came,
The farms made them food every day, just the same.
Through weather and critics and markets that fall,
The farms kept on farming in spite of it all.
They farmed without thank yous.
They farmed without praise.
They farmed on the hottest and coldest of days.
They'd bought all the food, yet the next day came more,
And the people thought of something they hadn't before.
Maybe food, they thought, doesn't come from a store.

Maybe farmers, perhaps, mean a little bit more. ❤️

Author Credit: Anna Richards at—2020 Consulting
Stay safe everyone, we are essential to someone!!

David G. Hallauer
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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Broomsedge Bluestem

It might look at first glance like leftover prairie grass against the dark green backdrop of a recently fertilized hay field. You might even be lulled in to thinking that this type of diversity is a good thing. That might not be the case.

Broomsedge bluestem is a warm season perennial becoming an increasing problem in cool season grass stands. Not overly competitive, it takes advantages of an ‘opening’ in the canopy, and slowly starts its spread. Mostly unpalatable to livestock, it takes the place of more desirable species, with elimination a tough task.

The reasons for its increase are numerous. It likes low fertility. Fields with low phosphorous levels seem to be particularly susceptible to invasion. It’s not uncommon for hay fields in northeast Kansas to have low P levels, making them prime candidates for reduced cool season grass growth and an opportunity for broomsedge to thrive. Low pH levels slow cool season grass growth, helping broomsedge thrive as well. Once established, it can produce allelopathic chemicals inhibiting other plants, including the nitrogen fixing bacteria necessary for good clover establishment and survival.

To combat broomsedge bluestem, consider an integrated approach. Harvest/graze at an appropriate time and height. This will help cool season grasses remain competitive, giving them every opportunity to maintain the canopy space they occupy, and keep broomsedge out.

Fertility is a key. Start with a soil test later this summer and develop a fertility program accordingly. Research in both Missouri and Oklahoma suggests that a balanced fertility program (pH and N/P/K) can return the species composition to a predominance of desirable species in as few as two years.

These practices won’t be an overnight fix, but if you don’t start soon, broomsedge will be your forage of default – and the cost of that recovery might be a lot greater.

Want to know more about what broomsedge looks like? Check out our Meadowlark Extension District Facebook page for a recent video.

Henbit Control in the Home Lawn

The little purple flower is doing its thing. Henbit - the square stemmed winter annual that seem to completely take over many lawns every spring.

Winter annual is an important part the plant’s description. It actually started growing last fall – we just didn’t see it until it flowered. Now it’s almost a waste of time and money to try to control it. You might make it look sick. You might even burn it back. Rarely, however, will you kill it. Rather than spend money on chemicals, consider a different management plan.

First, understand that as a winter annual, henbit will die when the weather gets hot. Keep mowing and let nature take its course.

Second, mark the calendar for a fall herbicide application. Henbit germinates about mid-October. Spraying on a day that is at least 50 degrees F with 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec in late October/early November can go a long way toward eliminating these plants when small and relatively easy to control. Follow up with spot treatments in March before it puts on too much growth.

NOTE: this course of action is also very good for dandelions as well.

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

Quarantine Mental Health Wellness Tips (Part I)

The following was shared with me from someone in the district and I thought it was good considering the times we are in. It is a rather lengthy read, but well worth it. This article was written by a psychologist who stated, “After having thirty-one sessions this week with patients where the singular focus was COVID-19 and how to cope, I decided to consolidate my advice and make a list that I hope is helpful to all. “

I can't control a lot of what is going on right now, but I can contribute this. I am surprised and heartened that this has been shared so widely! People have asked me to credential myself, so to that end, I am a doctoral-level Psychologist in NYS with a Psy.D. in the specialties of School and Clinical Psychology. The author is D. Eileen Feliciano, and this is being used with permission. Thank you, Henrietta Area for sharing it with me.

1. Stick to a routine. Go to sleep and wake up at a reasonable time, write a schedule that is varied and includes time for work as well as self-care.
2. Dress for the social life that you want, not the social life you have. Get showered and dressed in comfortable clothes, wash your face, brush your teeth. Take the time to do a bath or a facial. Put on some bright colors. It is amazing how our dress can impact our mood.
3. Get out at least once a day, for at least thirty minutes. If you are concerned with contact, try first thing in the morning, or later in the evening, and try less traveled streets and avenues. If you are high risk or living with those who are high risk, open the windows and blast the fan. It is amazing how much fresh air can do for spirits.
4. Find time to move each day, again daily for at least thirty minutes. If you don't feel comfortable going outside, there are many YouTube videos that offer free movement classes, and if all else fails, turn on the music and have a dance party!
5. Reach out to others, you guessed it, at least once daily for thirty minutes. Try to do FaceTime, Skype, phone calls, texting---connect with other people to seek and provide support. Don't forget to do this for your children as well. Set up virtual playdates with friends daily via Face Time, Facebook Messenger Kids, Zoom, etc.—your kids miss their friends, too!
6. Stay hydrated and eat well. This one may seem obvious, but stress and eating often don't mix well, and we find ourselves over-indulging, forgetting to eat, and avoiding food. Drink plenty of water, eat healthy foods, and challenge yourself to learn how to cook something new!
7. Develop a self-care toolkit. A lot of successful self-care strategies involve something for all the senses. An idea might be a soft blanket or stuffed animal, hot chocolate, photos of vacations, comforting music, lavender or eucalyptus oil, a small swing or rocking chair, a weighted blanket. A journal, an inspirational book, or a coloring book is wonderful, bubbles to blow or blowing water color on paper through a straw are visually appealing as well as work on controlled breathing. Gum, ginger ale, and ice packs are also good for anxiety regulation. For children, it is great to help them create a self-regulation comfort box (a shoe-box or bin they can decorate) that they can use on the ready for first-aid when overwhelmed.
8. Spend time playing with children. Children will rarely communicate how they are feeling, but will often make a bid for attention and communication through play. Don't be surprised to therapeutic themes of illness, doctor visits, and isolation play through. Understand that play is cathartic and helpful for children---it is how they process their world and problem solve, and there's a lot they are seeing and experiencing now.
9. Give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and a wide berth. A lot of cooped up time can bring out the worst in everyone. Each person will have moments when they will not be at their best. It is important to move with grace through blowups, to not show up to every argument you are invited to, and to not hold grudges and continue disagreements. Everyone is doing the best they can to make it through this.

10. Everyone find their own retreat space. Space is at a premium. It's important that people think through their own separate space for work and for relaxation. For children, help them identify a place where they can go to retreat when stressed. You can make this place cozy by using blankets, pillows, cushions, scarves, beanbags, tents, and "forts". It is good to know that even when we are on top of each other, we have our own special place to go to be alone.
11. Expect behavioral issues in children, and respond gently. We are all struggling with disruption in routine, none more than children, who rely on routines constructed by others to make them feel safe and to know what is coming next. Expect increased anxiety, worries, and fears, nightmares, difficulty separating or sleeping, testing limits, and meltdowns. Do not introduce major behavioral plans or consequences at this time---hold stable and focus on emotional connection.
12. Focus on safety and attachment. We are going to be living for a bit with the unprecedented demand of meeting all work deadlines, homeschooling children, running a sterile household, and making a whole lot of entertainment in confinement. We can get wrapped up in meeting expectations in all domains, but we must remember that these are scary and unpredictable times for children. Focus on strengthening the connection through time spent following their lead, through physical touch, through play, through therapeutic books, and via verbal reassurances that you will be there for them in this time.
13. Lower expectations and practice radical self-acceptance. This idea is connected with #12. We are doing too many things in this moment, under fear and stress. This does not make a formula for excellence. Instead, give yourself what psychologists call "radical self-acceptance", accepting everything about yourself, your current situation, and your life without question, blame, or pushback. You cannot fail at this---there is no roadmap, no precedent for this, and we are all truly doing the best we can in an impossible situation.

Next week will be part two.

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Intervals Boost Fitness

You can boost your fitness by adding short bursts of intense activity, or “intervals.” Research shows that alternating these intense activity bursts with lighter activity can be better for your overall health than slow, sustained exercise.

The key is starting at a level that is right for you and build from there. If you walk for exercise, start by adding a 30-second interval of brisk walking or jogging several times during your walk.

Gardening for Exercise

Gardening and yard care are physical activities you can enjoy for a lifetime. As with any type of activity, it pays to warm up your body before you do any type of gardening activity. Start by walking for about 5 minutes and do some basic stretching to lubricate your joints.

Once you are warmed up, there are four basic rules to follow to avoid painful gardening and lifting.

Stay in a neutral position whenever possible. Think about bringing the garden up to you, or going down to where your garden is, and try to avoid twisting movements, which cause back stress.

Lift with your legs. These muscles are stronger than your back muscles.

Keep what you are lifting balanced and close to your body. Holding at arm’s length adds 7 to 10 times more stress on your back.

Limit twisting. Tighten abdominal muscles as you are lifting. If you need to turn while lifting, pivot your feet instead of twisting your back.

A good cool-down to gardening is just as important as a warm-up. While it may be tempting to just sit down right after hours of activity, slow walking is better. Follow up with more stretches - a little slower and longer this time.