

Jody G. Holthaus
District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

Change

I heard a speaker say, “the only person that likes change, is a baby with a wet diaper”. Funny but true. I sit in my home, working from there, watching our once quiet road. We are on the main route of the transmission lines for the wind farm in Nemaha county to Leavenworth county. The traffic is unreal about 50 semi-trucks a day, and lots of lots of pickups, bulldozers, and other equipment I don’t know the name of. Although the traffic is annoying, they have been very tolerant of my dogs, that think this is “their” road and once when the horses got out, they even offered to help me catch them. They have been nothing but kind and considerate. BUT, yesterday our once scenic vistas got obliterated with giant cement poles that will hold these power lines of 340,000 volts. Progress they say, for whom I ask?

My husband says I won’t even see them one day, but right now they are a symbol to me how everything in my life is changing. Social distancing is not that hard if you live on a farm and you are essential. But the thought of summer without ballgames, picnics and all the other things makes me sick. I keep telling myself it could be worse, and this too shall pass, I hope. In the meantime, life on the farm goes on. I’m encouraged by the baby calves racing around, a new litter of puppies and a pesky wild animal that’s become a pet.

I had a question this week, “is it too soon to turn out on brome?”. The rule of thumb is to have 6 to 10 inches of growth, with an absolute minimum of 3-4 inches. I’ve seen cattle turned out on native grass already, and it’s too soon. You can tell if it’s too soon if you can see their hocks. So how do you know what you’ve got out there? Using a grazing stick you can measure in 10 to 20 places and average the height. Good fertilized brome with a dense stand can have 350 to 450 pounds of dry matter per inch per acre. So for instance, if your average measurement in 10 inches, you don’t want to grub it into the ground, so you leave 4 inches. That gives you 6 inches to work with. If you do the math, 6 inches X 400 = 2400 pounds of dry matter per inch per acre. Then you simply multiply by the number of acres in the pasture. This will give you a good idea of what kind of stocking rate you can use.

So how do you determine what your cows need to eat? A 1200 pound cow that is lactating will eat 3% of her body weight, so 36 pounds a day. When you do the math you can determine how many cattle your acreage can support, if Mother Nature cooperates.

They tell me that this Pandemic is a Black Swan event, something that is rare. I would guess a Black Swan is also beautiful. I guess it’s time to look for the beauty in this Pandemic. Being alone with family on our farm is something I have craved for years while driving to town to work. Seeing people help each other and unselfishly stay at home for the good of all. Maybe we will learn to live without all the “extra” stuff that we thought were necessary. Maybe these home schooled kids will turn out better because they get to spend more time with family and siblings. Maybe these ugly power poles will someday seem like beautiful clothes pins holding down the sky, someday!

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

Mole Control

If you haven't *seen* them already, it won't be long until you can *feel* them underneath you as you mow. Moles: one of a homeowner's biggest turf grass nuisances...

The soil upheaval is a result of the moles looking for food. With earthworms as their primary food source, moles burrow in the soil in search of them (and grubs), disturbing everything as they go. They can even uproot small plants and feed on flower bulbs.

Control is difficult. There are many home remedies (chewing gum, broken glass, etc...), but most are inconsistent and unproven. Poison baits tend to fail because moles feed on earthworms and grubs, not the vegetable matter base typical of most baits. Grub control products might reduce grub populations, but they are less effective against earthworms, leaving the mole's primary food source untouched. Traps are the best control method. They come in different forms (harpoon, choker, and scissor-jawed), each one effective once their placement and setting is fine-tuned.

For the best trapping results, start by determining the active runs. Some are abandoned soon after construction. Others are used for longer time periods. Determine active runs using a broomstick or other object to poke holes in multiple runs. Return a day later. If they've been repaired, they are active runs and should be used for trap placement.

Place traps in active runs by digging out a little soil, placing the trap and then replacing loose soil. Secure well so the trap's recoil will not lift it out of the ground. Make sure the triggering mechanism is in the center of the run.

Finish by pushing down two more holes, one on each side of the trap. The hope is that moles will be caught when they try to repair the tunnel. If you haven't caught a mole in three days, move the trap and start over!

For mole control references and a how-to video, see our K-State Research and Extension mole control page located at <http://www.wildlife.k-state.edu/species/moles/index.html>.

Fruit Damage from Cold Temperatures

Twenty-eight degrees. That's the temperature where most fruit trees see the start of damage from cold temperatures. It differs by crop and growth stage, but 28 degrees is a good baseline. Apple research, for example, shows the potential for around a ten percent kill of fruit buds when temperatures drop to the 28-degree level.

How cold did it get? Every microclimate is different, but good general area information can be obtained by checking out the Kansas Mesonet sites at <http://mesonet.k-state.edu/>. An analysis of soil temperatures from the Rossville station show multiple hour time periods during the morning hours of April 10 and 13 that could cause mortality. Fortunately, temperatures didn't drop at this site to the lower temperatures necessary for much greater mortality rates.

For information about fruit specific damage potential, see the latest KSU Horticulture newsletter: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/2020/April14_2020_15.pdf. This article also includes a great description on how to evaluate fruit buds for damage.

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

Mental Health Wellness for Coping with Quarantine (Part 2)

Last week I shared with the first half of some tips to help with wellness during these challenging times. This advice is from Dr. Eileen Feliciano, a New York psychologist. This is what she has shared with patients where the singular focus was COVID-19 and how to cope.

*Limit social media and COVID conversations, especially around children. One can find tons of information to consume, and it changes minute to minute. The information is often sensationalized, negatively skewed, and alarmist. Find a trusted source that you can check in with consistently, limit it to a few times a day, and set a time limit for yourself in how much you consume (again 30 minutes tops, 2 to 3 times daily). Keep news and alarming conversation out of earshot from children—they see and hear everything and can become very frightened by what they hear.

*Notice the good in the world, the helpers. There is a lot of scary, negative, and overwhelming information to take in regarding this pandemic. There are also a ton of stories of people sacrificing, donating, and supporting one another in miraculous ways. It is important to counter-balance the heavy information with the hopeful information with the hopeful information.

*Help others. Find ways, big and small, to give back to others. Support your restaurants, offer to grocery shop, check in with elderly neighbors, write psychological wellness tips for others---helping others gives us a sense of agency when things seem out of control.

*Find something you can control, and control the heck out of it. In moments of big uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the world. Organize your bookshelf, purge your closet, put together that furniture. It helps to anchor and ground us when the bigger things are chaotic.

*Find a long-term project to dive into. Now is the time to learn how to play the keyboard, put together a huge jigsaw puzzle, start a 15-hour game of Risk, paint a picture, read a series of books, crochet a blanket. Find something that will keep you busy, distracted, and engaged to take breaks from what is going on in the outside world.

*Engage in repetitive movements and left-right movements. Research has shown that repetitive movement (knitting, coloring, painting, clay sculpting, jump roping etc.) especially left-right movement (running, drumming, skating, hopping) can be effective at self-soothing and maintaining self-regulation in moments of stress.

*Find an expressive art and go for it. Our emotional brain is very receptive to the creative arts, and it is a direct portal for release of feeling. Find something that is creative such as (sculpting, drawing, dancing, music, singing, playing) and give it your all. See how relieved you can feel. It is a very effective way of helping kids to emote and communicate as well.

*find lightness and humor in each day. There is a lot to be worried about, and with good reason. Counterbalance this heaviness with something funny each day: cat videos on YouTube, a funny movie---we all need to little comedic relief in our day, every day.

*"Chunk" your quarantine, take it moment by moment. We have no road map for this. We don't know what this will look like in 1 day, 1 week, or 1 month from now. Often, when I work with patients who have anxiety around overwhelming issues, I suggest that they engage in a strategy called "chunking"---focusing on whatever bite-sized piece of a challenge that feels manageable. Whether that be 5 minutes, a day, or a week at time---find what feels doable for you, and set a time stamp for how far ahead in the future you will let yourself worry. Take each chunk one at a time, and move through stress in pieces.

*Remind yourself daily that this temporary. It seems in the midst of this quarantine that it will never end. It is terrifying to think of the road stretching ahead of us. Please take time to remind yourself that although this is very scary and difficult, and will go on for an undetermined amount of time, it is a season of life and it will pass. We will return to feeling free, safe, busy, and connected in the days ahead.

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*And last, but not least, find the lesson. This whole crisis can seem sad, senseless, and at times avoidable. When psychologists with trauma, a key feature to helping someone work through said trauma is to help them find their agency, the potential positive outcomes they can effect, the meaning and construction that can come out of destruction. What can each of us learn here, in big and small ways, from this crisis? What needs to change in ourselves, our homes, our communities, our nation, and our world?

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Pulses: Cornerstone of Blue Zone Eating

Pulses can be thought of as the world's No. 1 longevity food. Pulses are the dried seeds of legume plants. You are probably most familiar with dry beans, lentils, dry peas, and chickpeas, but hundreds of different pulses are grown around the world.

Legumes are nutrition powerhouses and are unique because, nutritionally, they belong to both the protein and vegetable food groups. They have no cholesterol, are high in fiber, and are naturally low in fat. They are also good sources of folate, potassium, iron, and magnesium. Legumes are a versatile and inexpensive choice for people who must control blood sugar. People in Blue Zones® eat a full cup of beans every day. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend eating at least a half-cup every day, but the average American eats about 4 tablespoons per day.

Pulses are often overlooked but many options are available, such as canned beans, and dry beans are easy to cook and freeze for later use. Though dry beans don't require soaking, doing so reduces cooking time and helps dissolve gas-producing oligosaccharides.

For soaking, use 10 cups of water per pound. Beans double or triple in size, so use a large pot. Bring water to a boil and simmer beans 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat, cover, and let stand 1 to 4 hours. Drain, add fresh water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer gently until beans are tender but firm. Most beans will cook in 45 minutes to 2 hours. While you can add herbs and spices at any time during cooking, wait to add salt until beans are tender as it tends to toughen them. Acidic foods (lemon juice, vinegar, tomatoes, wine, etc.) should be added after beans are cooked because they can prevent beans from becoming tender.

Lentils and split peas do not require soaking. Sort and remove debris, rinse, and boil lentils 15 to 20 minutes, split peas 30 minutes. Do not add salt during cooking.

For more information on cooking with beans and recipes, go to beaninstitute.com or usapulses.org.