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District Extension Agent  
Livestock and Natural Resources

### Rain Day

Sometimes in farm and ranch life, you need a rain day. A day when you are forced to catch your breath and regroup. This is true this time of year when the working cattle, fencing, planting, spraying weeds, and brush all come at once.

Now it seems my work has been on "rain days." In the past few weeks, we are trying to figure out how to do our jobs from a distance. Talk about thinking outside the box! We have been making plans for our Tailgate Talk pasture series. We are hoping the first session will be virtual, and with the hope that the subsequent sessions can be in person. Maybe at a social distancing "in person."

This series has been popular, the last two summers. The first session will include Dustin Schwandt, our N.R.C.S. Range Conservationist, David Hallauer, the Meadowlark Extension District Crops and Soils Agent and myself.

The second session is all about Fencing and Brush control. The third session will be on Water systems, moving water around the pasture.

It's great to take in all three sessions, but not necessary if you can't make one of them.

We will discuss how to measure so you can manage your grass resource, using a Grazing stick, knowing what production capabilities your pasture has, and plant health and growth.

If you are interested in participating, give me a call or email [jholthau@ksu.edu](mailto:jholthau@ksu.edu).

We are all in this together!

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

### ***Invasive Brush Species – Buckbrush***

Grass managers understand well the potential for lost production from weed and brush infestations in forage stands. Left unchecked, a single plant can soon become a forest.

One of our more common brush species native to Kansas is buckbrush, often also called coralberry. Typically two to three feet tall, it is seen in many pastures and wooded areas. It's reddish/purple berry often persists through the winter and might even be visible now. A single plant soon becomes many as the plant's above-ground runners help buckbrush quickly spread, forming clumps that reduce forage production.

References differ on the value of top removal as a control method. The underground runners make it very tolerant of mowing unless performed at a time when the plant's nonstructural carbohydrates are at a low level. This occurs as the plant's leaves begin to change from light to dark green color. Whether you are mowing (early to mid-May) or burning (late spring), any control method will need to be repeated over two to three years to reduce stands.

Chemical control can also be initiated as the leaves change colors. Herbicides that contain the active ingredient 2,4-D are effective, as are other active ingredients like picloram, aminopyralid, or metsulfuron. Timing is important, and label directions must be adhered to. Picloram is a restricted use pesticide and requires a Private Pesticide Applicator's License to purchase/apply. Some of the aminopyralid/metsulfuron combination products can damage cool-season grasses and should be used with caution.

Product information (product names/rates/timing/etc...) can be found online in the 2020 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide at: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/SRP1155.pdf>. Always read the label when considering the use of herbicides.

### ***Lawnmower Blades – Keep Them Sharp***

Can you remember the last time you sharpened your lawn mower blades? Under typical mowing conditions, blades should be sharpened after every 10 hours of use. More frequent sharpening may be required when conditions are less than optimum or the presence of foreign objects in the yard could dull blades more quickly.

Dull blades don't cut cleanly. Instead, they leave the ends of the leaf blades shredded rather than cut. The shredded ends dry out and the lawn takes on a whitish cast.

It may not seem like a big deal now, but a sharp blade becomes even more important when the turf starts putting up seed heads in May. These seed heads are tougher than the rest of the grass blade and more likely to shred, increasing the ragged look associated with a dull blade.

For information on sharpening mower blades, contact your local small engine store or mower dealer or check out this helpful online video from the Kansas Healthy Yards program: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/component/allvideoshare/video/how-to-sharpen-a-mower-blade?Itemid=101>.

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

Remember to M.A.S.K.

Everywhere I go, which is much, you see people sporting the latest in masks. Keep the following in mind for safe, effective homemade mask use. Remember to M.A.S.K. in order to save lives.

**M**—Multi-layered, tightly-woven 100% cotton. Save surgical or N95 masks for healthcare providers. Use cotton thread counts of 180+.

**A**—Avoid your face. Remove it from behind. Never touch the front of the mask. Always remove it from behind your head.

**S**—Scrap it if it's damaged, soiled, or doesn't fit. Make sure it's breathable and fits snug. Don't use damp, wet, or dirty masks.

**K**—Keep it clean—use the mask and your hands. Wash your hands before you put it on, and after you take it off. Use a fresh mask each day.

Remember to M.A.S.K. and stay home, stay safe, and save lives.

### Staying Healthy While Working Remotely

Most of us are in month two, working from our remote location. As this continues, it is more important than ever to make sure we are using workplace habits that keep us healthy physically, mentally, and financially no matter where we are working. Here are some tips for maintaining physical health while working remotely.

Practicing healthy workplace habits is not that much different working remotely than it is working in a formal office environment. However, the dedicated office space and working environment are separate. This brings not only challenges but also opportunities for maintaining your physical health while working remotely. Here are some things to keep in mind and are useful as you examine your current workspace and routine.

\*Maintain good posture where you sit or stand to work. It is tempting to take the laptop to the couch or lounge chair while working remotely. While this might feel comfortable at the moment, it will not promote good posture for the long haul. It is essential to use a variety of settings for your workday. These include sitting, standing, and walking while practicing good posture in all settings.

\*If you have peripheral devices available to you, connect an external keyboard, mouse, headphones, and a monitor to increase your comfort level and define your workspace.

\*Take regular breaks of 5 minutes every hour to look away from the screen and improve circulation. While at the office, this is accomplished when a co-worker stops by to share an idea or ask a question. In your current environment, it might be a pet wanting to play catch, a family member with a problem, or if working alone, a self-imposed break to look out the window.

\*Schedule lunch, breaks, stretching, walking, and processing time. While working remotely, you are not as bound by the clock and regular office hours. You are in charge and need to take control of break times and when to go home. This can be accomplished by setting a phone notice, wellness app, Outlook, or a sticky note on the monitor. For processing time of an idea, consider going on a waling meeting of one person or one of your new office mates that you share your home with.

\*Stock your kitchen with healthy snacks and lunch options. One person recently shared that they pack these each day and put in the refrigerator just like they did when taking them to the office.

\*Stay consistent with your eating, sleeping, and exercise routines as appropriate. This routine is something that you can maintain control over in these uncertain times, and it is vital to maintaining physical health.

Nancy C. Nelson  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

### Eating Mindfully

People in Okinawa say "Hara Hachi Bu" before meals to remind them to stop eating when their stomachs are 80% full. This strategy helps them eat mindfully, and it is one of the Power 9® traits of people who live in Blue Zones®.

Studies show that cutting back on calories helps maintain a healthy weight and can lead to better heart health and longevity. Losing just 10% of your body weight can lead to lower blood pressure and cholesterol, which reduces your risk of heart disease.

Think about your eating habits for a moment. Do you ever eat on the run, in your car, or while watching TV? Do you eat at your desk or in front of the computer? It is easy to eat while distracted, and this "mindless" style of eating often leads you to eat more than you need. To eat mindfully, pay full attention to what you are eating without being distracted. You will notice your body's hunger and fullness cues, and mindful eating can help you distinguish between physical hunger and emotional hunger.

When you feel like eating, ask yourself if you are actually hungry or if you are bored or anxious. If you tend to be an emotional eater, try other strategies before eating. Take a walk or get some sort of exercise, drink a glass of water or cup of tea, or write in a journal.

People in Blue Zones® communities eat their smallest meal in the evening and avoid late-night snacking. Using a smaller plate or bowl for this meal can prompt you to eat less, and planning ahead for healthy smaller meals will also help.

It takes about 20 minutes from the time you eat for your brain to receive the message that your stomach is full. Eating slowly gives you the opportunity to receive this message without overeating. By making it a habit to sit down, savor your food, and enjoy it, you are more likely to slow down, eat less, and enjoy your food more. Remember, Hara Hachi Bu!