

Jody G. Holthaus
District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

Unsolicited Advice

If you see me and think I'm trying a new hair color it wasn't intentional! Putting wood in the outdoor stove, I guess I singed my hair. It was this funky orange matted mess. I was instructed to not get so close to the fire (duh), I explained my arms are shorter than said husband and son, and probably they should do it from now on!

Advice, I've worked with quite a few landowners and tenants during my tenure. Boy, there have been more than a few horror stories told. I firmly believe there are 3 sides to the story, the landowner, the tenant and then the truth. These negotiations are best done with a lot of communication.

With farms growing in size, it's not uncommon for the average farmer to have 4 to 40 landowners they are dealing with. The biggest mistake I see happening is the tenant (farmer/rancher) thinking they know what is best and they don't consult with the owner. This is a huge mistake.

Dr. Mykel Taylor, one of our rising star Ag Economists, suggests using your phone and taking some pictures of the property, crop or property structures and sending it to the landowner throughout the season. If there is a fence problem or a terrace that needs work, take a quick picture and send it along. In other words, just stay in touch!

If you are working with a landowner that is a different gender than you are, you **MUST** treat them as our equal.

The three most common types of leases used in Kansas are the fixed cash lease, the flexible cash lease, the crop share lease, and the custom farming contract.

Under a fixed cash lease the tenant pays a given amount of cash rent per acre per year for the use of the farm resources. The landlord may put some restrictions on what crops can be grown, or what tillage, conservation, and pest control practices can be used. Other than this, the tenant has free rein in planning the crop and livestock production program on the farm unit and receives all the crop and any associated USDA commodity program payments.

A variation of the fixed cash lease is a flexible lease, in which the actual rent to be paid depends on the actual yields attained and/or the selling prices available during the lease period. This ensures that the rent paid is in line with the profitability of the crops grown that year. Sometimes government payments and crop insurance benefits are also included in calculating the gross revenue. The landowner shares some of the risks of low yields or declining prices but also shares in the extra profits when prices and/or production exceed expectations.

The distinguishing characteristic of a crop share lease is that the owner receives a share of the crop and USDA payments as a return for the land resources used. There may be a separate rental charge for a good set of buildings or grain storage facilities. Both parties share the expenses, at the agreed-upon rate.

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

The Value of Ag Data – February 26th, 2020

North Carolina State University published an article in the fall of 2019 about on-farm data and increase in collection and interpretation of that data. In it, Communications Specialist Jennifer Howard states: *Never before have growers had so much information at their fingertips. From sensors embedded in farm machinery to constellations of satellites taking pictures, data is flowing everywhere. It is estimated that by 2025 an average-sized farm will produce over 1 million data points a day.* Think about that for a second. One million data points a day. How can you manage one million data points a day? Is it useful? How can it best be used? If it was stolen, would you pay to get it back?

All of those questions will be intertwined as part of a general discussion entitled *The Value of Ag Data (and how to capture it...)* hosted by the Meadowlark Extension District and Brown County Extension on Wednesday, February 26th, 2020 at the Glacial Hills Business Resource Center. We'll gather for coffee at 10:00 AM at the Center, located at 913 Dakota Street in Sabetha, kicking off the meeting at 10:15 with: *What is Ag Data and How Can We Capture Value From It?* K-State Research & Extension Cropping Systems Economist Dr. Terry Griffin has spent the better part of his career discussing ag data issues. He'll be on hand to share his observations about that data, and how it might be valued. After his presentation, we'll finish the morning with a producer/presenter discussion. We'll wrap up with a light lunch at noon.

For meal and handout count purposes, please RSVP by noon Monday February 24th to the Seneca Office of the Meadowlark Extension District at (785) 336-2184 or by e-mailing me at dhallaue@ksu.edu. It should be a great morning of discussion on all things ag data.

Pruning Fruit Trees

Mid-February through late March is fruit tree pruning season. That means, so long as the wood isn't frozen, it might be time to think about caring for those fruit trees. For mature trees, follow these steps in order until you reach removal of 30 percent of the tree:

Start by removing broken, damaged or diseased branches.

When two branches form a narrow angle, prune one out. Narrow angles are weak and more prone to breaking during wind or ice storms.

Remove suckers – branches that grow straight up from the trunk or major branches.

If two branches cross and rub against one another, remove one

Cut back or remove branches that are low and interfere with harvest or pruning.

Cut back branches to reduce the total size of the tree, if necessary.

Thin branches on the interior of the tree.

When cutting back a branch, always cut back to another branch or a bud. Do not leave a stub. Always cut at the branch collar when possible.

For more specific detail, check out the following publications: ***Pruning Apple and Pear Trees***: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3450.pdf> or ***Pruning Peaches, Plums, Cherries and Other Stone Fruits***: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3451.pdf>. Both publications are available online or upon request from a District Extension Office.

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

Healthy Eating Can Be Affordable

Whole grains, vegetables, fruits, fish, low-fat milk. These foods are basic to good health, yet most children and their families don't eat enough of them. Here are some tips to get you started.

Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables.

*Know when fruits and vegetables are in season (<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-through-seasons/seasonal-produce>).

*Frozen or canned vegetables and fruits may be less expensive than fresh, especially when not in season. Choose frozen vegetables without sauces, and fruits canned in juice to reduce fat and sugar.

*Buy only the foods that your family will eat before they spoil. Throwing away food is equivalent to throwing away money.

*Keep fruits and vegetables where they can be easily seen. For example, put fruit in bowls on tables or countertops so they are more visible and more likely to be eaten. Cup up vegetables like carrots, cucumbers and green peppers when you bring them home so they are readily available as snacks and to use in recipes.

*Grow some of your own vegetables. Even a few tomato plants in containers on a porch can yield a bounty of tomatoes in the summer.

Choose 100% whole grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, and pasta.

*Brown rice, oatmeal and unsweetened whole-grain cereal bought in bulk is usually a good buy. Look for whole-grain breads, tortillas and whole-grain pasta that are a good price.

*Be willing to spend a little more time preparing foods. In most cases, the more processed a food is, the more it will cost. For example, popcorn that is already popped or in a convenience form usually costs more than popcorn that needs to be popped in a kettle or popcorn popper.

Vary your protein sources---eat more seafood and beans.

*Canned tuna, canned pink salmon and some frozen fish are a good buy. Tuna salad, salmon patties, and fish tacos are a quick and tasty way to eat fish.

Dry beans and peas (black beans, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, split peas) are a great buy whether purchased dry or canned. Drain and rinse beans with water to remove most of the sodium.

*Use dry beans in place of some or all of the ground beef in recipes. Cooked lentils are a great meat extender or substitute for meat in spaghetti sauce and meatloaf. Similarly, cooked pinto beans work well in burritos, enchiladas and taco.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

When the power goes out, food safety

When refrigerators and freezers suffer a loss of electrical power, the refrigerated and frozen foods inside can become susceptible to foodborne contaminants in just a few hours.

Severe weather events such as blizzards, thunderstorms, and tornadoes can bring down power lines in a neighborhood. When the power goes out, the clock starts ticking on the viability of meats, seafood, ice cream, cut produce and even leftover pizza.

According to the USDA, bacteria such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Campylobacter* can grow within minutes of food entering the “Danger Zone” – the range of temperatures between 40°F and 140°F.

A refrigerator in good working order can maintain its temperature for about four hours; a full, reliable deep freezer can keep food frozen as long as 48 hours.

If you have nearby friends and neighbors that have extra space in their freezer, consolidating frozen foods is a great strategy. A full freezer will maintain its temperature longer than a freezer that’s only half full.

If you know a winter storm or blizzard is on the way, consider moving as much as possible from the refrigerator to the freezer. Leftover pot roast, tuna casserole, and plastic bottles of fruit juice will keep these foods in a colder environment and helps fill empty spaces in the freezer. You can also use water bottles, plastic gallon jugs of water, plastic storage containers filled with water. Just get them frozen before the power goes out. If you have a source for dry ice, consider adding a few blocks to your freezer. Dry ice can extend your safe zone by several hours.

As much as you can keep the doors closed. Don’t open them to peek in and check to see what the temperature is – just leave them closed. Avoid that temptation.

Refrigerator and freezer-rated thermometers are also a good permanent addition to your appliances. They’re inexpensive and will give you a reading the first time you open the appliance, after the power has been restored, and are important to use anytime.

After that, the question is simple: Keep it or toss it? Foods that are most vulnerable include meats, seafood, dairy and ice cream while those that are a bit more stable are whole fruits and vegetables, condiments and hard block cheese.

When checking the freezer, ice can be a good indicator. If an item is still frozen solid, or if you can still feel ice crystals, that’s a good thing. Whatever you do, don’t taste something and think, ‘Well, if it tastes OK, it’s still good.’ Bacteria doesn’t always reveal itself that way. The oft-repeated adage holds true: When in doubt, throw it out.