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District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

Tagging Calves

Livestock ear tags were developed in 1799 under the direction of Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, for identification of Merino sheep in the flock established for King George III. The first batch of sheep ear tags was made of tin.

Although ear tags were developed in Canada as early as **1913** as a means to identify cattle when testing for tuberculosis, the significant increase of use of ear tags appeared with the outbreak of BSE in the UK.

Ear tags come in all different colors, and farmers often have meaning behind the colors they use and which ear the tag is in. Some use blue for bull calves and pink for heifer calves. Others use the placement as a gender id ear tags in the calf's left ear mean it's a heifer (girl) and in the right ear means it's a bull(boy). I had the idea to tag all the calves born in the first 21 days with a certain color and then the next 21 days a different color. That idea bombed with management! I guess you can get a bit carried away with the whole color-coding calves.

Since we're a cow-calf farm and our calves are born on our farm, we give them ear tags when they're first born, this helps to keep the right calf with its mother, especially when it's time to go to pasture.

There are quite a few ways to do your numbering and identification the International letter for calves born in 2020 is H, Last year calves were G and calves born in 2021 will be J.

Letters I O Q and V are not used because they can easily be mistaken for numbers.

Some people will number in the order there were born, so at the end of the season, you can see if calf #1 is larger than calf #25. I guess this will work if you always keep this group together and don't try to sort to go to different pastures. I wouldn't want to consult my calving book to try and match up pairs all the time.

Of course, most of the ear tag id is useless if it's not recorded somewhere. At the Extension office, we offer two different Cow/calf record books. The first is printed at KSU, it has lots of helpful stuff in it, you can record up to 220 calves. It has a gestation chart, an International lettering system, all the calving ease scores, udder scores, docility score, and body condition scoring. The second is the NCBA book which includes a calendar that some find helpful.

There's room to record 425-600 calves, it contains all of the above plus a calendar for 2020, pasture usage, performance charts, AI records and a chart for keeping track of supplements.

Besides these about every Breed registry has its own calving record books. There are about as many options as to how to tag your calves!

David G. Hallauer
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Kansas Mesonet

In 1986, weather stations were established at all K-State Research & Extension research centers and equipment facilities. These stations combined to form the Kansas Mesonet and can provide excellent information for making real-time production agriculture decisions. Located in long-term sites as recommended by the World Meteorological Organization, these sites employ research-grade instrumentation for highly accurate weather data collection.

Located online at www.mesonet.k-state.edu, information collected from Mesonet stations is updated in real-time, providing temperatures and wind speed (among others) to site visitors. A click on any of the stations provides further information specific to that site.

Trying to figure out soil temperatures for planting? The Kansas Mesonet provides current soil temperatures with the ability to download historical information for trend analysis as well. The same is true for much of the data collected on the network, allowing you to take a look back at things like air temperatures and soil moisture as well.

Got alfalfa? The growing degree calculator can tell you when to start scouting for alfalfa weevil. Research shows that it takes 150 or more growing degree units for alfalfa weevil to start feeding. An average of three weather stations surrounding our Meadowlark Extension District counties shows we are still under 60 GDU's. Another week of pretty warm temperatures in the forecast means weevil will be feeding soon and the Mesonet allows us to monitor as such.

Real-time inversion calculations are posted on the page for pesticide applicator reference, as are relative humidity and other measures important for those conducting prescribed burns. Want information on climate in Kansas? The Mesonet site provides a link there as well.

As the network continues to expand, an even greater breadth of data will be available, all at one site. Check it out today, and watch for upcoming announcements about additional network sites here in the Meadowlark Extension District. Want a tour of the site? Drop me a line and I'll walk you through the many features it has to offer.

Cure the Itch by Planting Peas

According to the Kansas Mesonet, our two-inch soil temperatures are just a tad under 40 degrees F. You know what grows well when soil temperatures reach 40 degrees? Peas.

If you can't wait to get something planted, consider one of several types of peas adapted to Kansas. Shelling peas like Little Marvel, Green Arrow, Knight, Maestro, Burpeeana and Mr. Big are all early maturing types that allow for harvest before hot weather ends production.

Snow peas or sugar snap peas are options, too. Recommended snow peas include Dwarf Grey Sugar and Mammoth Melting Sugar. Sugar snap peas adapted to Kansas include Sugar Bon, Sugar Ann, Super Sugar Snap and Sugar Sprint.

Plant peas about a half-inch deep so they germinate and emerge quickly. Plant two inches apart within the row in rows six to eight inches apart so floppy plants can support one another. Rabbit prevention will likely be needed.

Want to know what other crops might be planted soon? Check out our KSRE Vegetable Garden Planting Guide available through any of our District Offices or online at <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf315.pdf>.

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

No News from Cindy.

Nancy Nelson
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Family Life

Strategies for Spring Cleaning Success

Did you ever think about how the spring-cleaning ritual developed? Before the advent of electricity and a host of other modern conveniences, homes were heated with coal, oil and/or wood, and lit by gas or candlelight. Soot and grime were the natural companions of winter. Once spring arrived, the doors were thrown open, and everything – rugs, furniture, cupboards, curtains and more – was aired out, cleaned out, swept out and scrubbed out.

Although today's centrally heated homes don't collect that intensity of dirt, with weather conditions keeping us indoors all too long, our instincts are to make everything look fresh and bright come that first whiff of spring with a new cleaning schedule. The American Cleaning Institute offers these strategies.

Clear It Out. Start by getting rid of the things that are needlessly filling up your home. Recycle, sell or donate items.

Inventory Your Supplies. Before you start cleaning, make sure you have all the necessary supplies on hand. The basics should include an all-purpose spray cleaner (for small, washable areas), an all-purpose powder or liquid cleaner (for large washable surfaces like floors and walls), chlorine bleach (an effective disinfectant, particularly where mold and mildew are present), glass cleaner, and toilet bowl cleaner. Don't forget to check your supply of vacuum cleaner bags and trash bags.

Make a Plan. Decide on your cleaning style. Some people find it more effective to clean one room at a time. Others prefer to group tasks – such as cleaning windows in several rooms at once or leaving all the vacuuming until the end. If one room at a time is your style, decide on the order. Generally, it's best to do the rooms that need the most work or get the most traffic first. That way, if your cleaning plans get derailed, you can still be proud of what you've accomplished.

Recruit Help. It's not necessary to do everything yourself. Enlist family members. Start early. Assign tasks according to age and ability. Have lunch preplanned so your helpers don't lose momentum. Play lively music that keeps everyone's energy up. You could also find a like-minded friend and clean together at each other's home. If your budget allows, you don't have to do every bit of cleaning yourself. Someone else can come in and wash the windows ... or buff the floors ... or shampoo the carpets ... or clean the upholstery ... or even do the majority of the cleaning after you've removed the clutter.