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#### Animals and COVID-19

In the beginning, there were a lot of jokes about Coronavirus and who is immune, but now it's no laughing matter. There have been several questions pertaining to COVID-19 and any potential interactions with animals.

Here are the key points directly from the CDC

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people and others cause illness in certain types of animals.
- Coronaviruses that infect animals can become able to infect people, but this is rare.
- We do not know the exact source of the current outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- We do not have evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19.
- We do not have evidence to suggest that imported animals or animal products imported pose a risk for spreading the 2019 novel coronavirus in the United States.

These links from the CDC can give you more information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/animals.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#animals>

Or for more information about livestock and the COVID-19 check out this website:

<https://extension.sdstate.edu/novel-coronavirus-and-livestock-ther-connection>

As a reminder, we are still learning about this novel virus and its interactions with hosts. The links to the CDC are constantly being updated as we learn more, and as recommendations are made. Please hunker down and be safe!

David G. Hallauer  
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### ***Soybean Inoculation***

Soybeans are extremely adaptable. They wouldn't be grown here if they weren't. One of the soybean's adaptation features is its ability to fix its own nitrogen from the atmosphere via nodules on the plant's roots. It's an important necessity when a 60 bushel per acre soybean crop requires close to 300 pounds of N per acre.

For soils that have had recent soybean crops, it's likely that soils have enough bacteria for nodulation, and N production to occur. It's likely why yield responses to inoculation are quite variable in Kansas and other states where soybeans are commonly grown.

It never hurts to take a second look at inoculation, however. The cost inoculation is low and potential yield loss from poor inoculation can be significant unless available soil N levels are high according to some work by KSU Cropping Systems Agronomist Dr. Ignacio Ciampitti. His work shows that nodulation might be particularly important if you meet one of the following:

Where soybeans haven't been grown in the past four years, the bacteria may not compete well with other soil microbes, with numbers gradually declining until replenished.

When soil pH's are at extreme levels: less than 5.5 or greater than 8.75. At pH levels in the six or seven range, nodulation should be optimal.

When soil erosion has been an issue, topsoil may lack bacteria and need enhanced.

When soil organic matter levels drop below one percent, inoculation can be helpful.

When severe drought/flooding occurs, bacteria populations decline. Short term flooding is okay, but some of the flooding time frames last year could adversely affect Bradyrhizobium japonicum populations in the soil. Fields under water more than a week may need attention.

When high heat occurs during the early growth period, plant-bacteria establishment is reduced and inoculation should be considered.

Weren't planning to inoculate this year? Make sure you are checking the boxes above. If not, inoculation might be a pretty good insurance policy.

### ***Help for Vegetable Gardeners***

If 2020 encourage you to start vegetable gardening – it's about time to get started. Gardening is a great opportunity to get a little activity in the sunshine while producing food.

If gardening is something new to you, it may be overwhelming. How much seed do I purchase? How much area do I need? Fortunately, our K-State Research and Extension Vegetable Garden Planting Guide is here to help. It provides information on the size of planting needed per person and the average crop expected per 10 feet of crop as well as a calendar highlighting suggested planting dates and expected harvest dates. It includes crop specific information to help you determine what might work best for you.

Our Meadowlark Extension District Office are currently closed to the public, but the planting guide is easily accessed online at <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/mf315.pdf> .

Want to dig a little deeper? Consider the 77 page Kansas Garden Guide. It takes the Vegetable Garden Planting Guide – and expands it even further. It is available for download or order online at <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/Item.aspx?catId=534&pubId=8219> . Now is a great time to get outside and do a little gardening while social distancing.

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

What Is Social Distancing? CDC recommended guidelines to help stop the spread of coronavirus.

“Social distancing” is a term used to describe infection control actions taking by public health officials to stop or slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease. Most recently, it’s been referenced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or CDC as one of the best strategies in preventing the spread of the coronavirus or (COVID-19).

The CDC defines social distancing as “remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible. It is less drastic than quarantine or isolation, which are used for people who are suspected to be carrying the virus.

While some people may find social distancing to be a big relief---canceling business-related travel to a conference may give someone peace of mind---others find it to be a major inconvenience. Many concerts and public gatherings have been canceled due to the recommendation about social distancing.

Social distancing may be the most effective way for people who aren’t infected with the coronavirus to avoid getting it. But it does lead to some major changes in how businesses are run, public events are held, and social interactions occur.

Understanding what it means, why it’s recommended, and how to practice it can help alleviate any fears you may have.

Why is the CDC Recommending It?

According to the CDC, coronavirus is spread mainly through person-to-person contact. It’s believed that people who are in close contact (within 6 feet of one another) are most likely to spread it. It spreads through respiratory droplets that are produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of anyone nearby and may be inhaled into the lungs, which can spread the disease.

And while it’s believed that people who are the sickest are most likely to spread coronavirus, some people might spread it before they begin to show symptoms. That’s why it may be important to practice social distancing even with people who don’t appear ill.

It may also be possible to contract COVID-19 through contaminated surfaces or objects. An individual who touches a surface that has the virus on it and then touches their mouth or nose, for example, may contract the virus.

The CDC believes COVID-19 spreads easily throughout communities. So they have recommended social distancing as a way to help stop the spread.

If individuals reduce their contact with one another, people will be less likely to pass the virus on. This can be the best way to prevent what they refer to as “community spread.”

Some examples of ways that individuals and organizations have already begun putting social distancing in place include:

- \*Companies establishing work from home policies
- \*Colleges closing down campuses
- \*Cancellation of mass gatherings
- \*Professional sports leagues suspending their seasons

While the CDC isn’t recommending everyone take drastic measures like isolating themselves, they are advising people to take precautions, especially those who may be at a higher risk for contracting the disease.

Next week my column will cover how does social distancing help during a pandemic and how to social distance in your own life.

Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

### Walk Kansas has Begun

In the Meadowlark District we are aligned with the K-State Research and Extension administrative instructions to cancel face-to-face workshops, activities, and events into the month of May to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

One program that does have a 'green light' to proceed is Walk Kansas. Participants log their minutes of walking and other physical exercises. Collectively as a team of six, they work together to meet a goal during the 8 weeks. Challenge 1 is to explore the 8 Wonders of Kansas, a 480-mile trail. Challenge 2 goes Cross Country beginning in the NE corner and trekking diagonally the 768 miles to the SW corner of the state. Or, they can choose Challenge 3 to Explore the Little Balkans, southeast Kansas, and then head to Nicodemus, a trail which is 1152 miles.

Walk Kansas began on March 15 and continues through May 9 with 180 participants in the Meadowlark District.

While walking and other types of physical activity continue to be the core of the program, we will learn about lifestyle traits that are common in regions of the world where people live measurably longer and healthier lives.

It is common to think that health and longevity are genetic traits. While genes do determine 20 to 25% of our overall health quality, lifestyle habits and the environment have a much greater influence on how well or long we live.

Maintaining strong social connections plays a major role in our mental and physical health. Studies show that we are influenced by those in our social circle. Think about your social circle. How do they influence things like your eating habits, smoking, happiness, loneliness or obesity? How do you think you influence them?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate and/or vigorous intensity activity per week. You can find your walking shoes, take advantage of the spring weather and get started walking too.