

March 6, 2020

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No News from Jody.

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Looking Ahead to the Grazing Season

According to KSU Range Scientist Dr. Keith Harmony the old ‘take half and leave half rule of grazing management ‘is probably the most common and most important rule of thumb for rangeland managers to follow’. What does it really mean, though?

Years of grazing studies have shown that animal performance and vegetative production are both at near optimal levels when grazing removes approximately 50 percent of the growing season’s top growth. This is also the level of removal that can be sustained over long periods of time without causing detrimental animal or forage production issues. At this level, the animal is using 25 percent, with the other 25 percent disappearing as a consequence of trampling, weathering, etc...

What about the other 50 percent? That’s the half that helps the stand remain sustainable. The remaining leaves are used for photosynthesis, resulting in new leaf material, increased root growth, and storage of carbohydrates for the dormant season so grasses kicked off the next growing season. Leave less than 50 percent, and you may well sacrifice the ability of the plant to fully ‘recover’ as needed for long term sustainability of the stand.

Don’t think you can make the enterprise cash flow without making money? Research also shows that overgrazed pastures tend to produce lower net returns than pastures that are stocked at a moderate rate using the take half and leave half concept. It might seem like you are gaining some value from increased stocking rates on the front end, but the result is often a reduction in quality and quantity over time that isn’t sustainable.

We’re not to turn out yet. Now is a great time to take one last look at stocking rates and even ‘emergency’ grazing management plans so adjustments can be made that results in *long* term forage stand health as opposed short term.

Leaching Houseplants

Have you ever thought about the water your houseplants are growing in? It might not be as great for them as you think.

Consider this: we like houseplants to grow well so we add fertilizer. Fertilizers are salts that build up in soil over time. That build-up can harm plant roots, leading to scorched leaves and unhealthy plants. It tends to be worst in houseplants because they are grown in containers without that prevent roots from exploring additional soil area while holding fertilizers in that same limited area. Add in slower growth as a result of low light conditions in winter, and you can see real problems.

The solution to excessive houseplant salts is leaching. Leaching is the process of adding enough water to wash out excess salts. Simply take plants outside or put them in a bathtub or sink and then (slowly – so you don’t overflow the rim of the pot) add the amount of water that would equal twice the volume of the pot. This will help push salts through the soil medium.

If salt has formed a crust on the soil surface soil, remove it, just don’t take more than one-quarter of an inch of the underlying media. It might be a good time to consider repotting as well.

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

Use Common Sense to Protect from Coronavirus

As Americans brace for the impact of the new coronavirus in the United States, a pair of Kansas State University specialists say the best defense against the emerging threat may be one of the most simple.

“If you’re feeling panicked about the coronavirus—or not---go wash your hands,” said Erin Yelland, a K-State Research and Extension specialist in adult development and aging. “That is truly one of the best preventative actions we can take.”

The U. S. Centers for Disease Control, the country’s leading medical authority on emerging health threats, lists hand-washing at the top of a shortlist of preventative steps Americans can take toward COVOD-19, which is the particular strain of coronavirus now in the news.

The CDC’s other recommendations include:

- *Wash hands often for 20 seconds with soap and water.
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- *Cover your mouth with your sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- *Seek medical care for fever, cough or difficulty breathing.

Also, experts are encouraging Americans to avoid close contact with people who are sick and to disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched frequently. Those who feel sick should stay home or seek medical care immediately.

“Preventing sickness from this particular virus is like a lot of other respiratory viruses that circulate this time of year.” Said Londa Nwadike, a food safety specialist whose academic background is in public health, “The same steps we have taken to prevent getting the flu are important for stopping this virus, as well.”

Nwadike said reports of coronavirus in the U.S. is not cause for panic but should be taken seriously. She said that Americans should routinely read updates and information the CDC, and in Kansas from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

How to Clean Toys

For families with kids, the recent holiday season brought a whole lotta joy and a whole lotta toys. As younger kids mature each year, they're ready for a new chest of play things.

The American Cleaning Institute's recommendation to parents is to donate the gently loved toys to local nonprofits or offer them up to families in the neighborhood who have younger children who will continue to love them.

As you get the goodies ready for their new homes, cleaning them is always appreciated. Here are some ways to get them ready for giving.

Use soap and water to clean small plastic items such as blocks and rattles. Just be sure to rinse and dry them well.

Some toys can be put in the top rack of the dishwasher – if they are marked dishwasher-safe. Bath toys (which likely need a good cleaning) are a great example of this.

For toys that can't be washed in the sink or dishwasher, wipes are a great idea. Dolls and stuffed animals can usually be cleaned in the washer and dryer. It's recommended you put them in a pillowcase first, to avoid any potential damage.