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Livestock and Natural Resources

### What Does It Mean to Have Fog?

For decades I've lived with a person that always says, "90 days after a fog, it will rain". One year I threatened to test his belief, and I don't know the calendar got lost or something. After years of this, you just go on and agree. Then the other day, a caller told me, "90 days after an August fog, it will snow". Wow, that's a new one!

If you try to research this on the Internet, the weather channels quickly shoot it down as an old wife's tale. But in this case, it's an old hubby tale.

Another thing I've heard is to wean livestock by the sign of the moon. I've often tried to figure that out, but the Farmer's Almanac is all sorts of confusing, and I leave it frustrated that I don't know the difference between a waxing and waning moon. It seems, if it's a full moon, then the calves can see better, and perhaps that gives them comfort, but then on another note, that gives them the light to walk around the pen, bawling all night.

I think it's better to wean calves when you are ready and get some help lined up!

Weaning is considered one of the most stressful periods in the productive life of a beef calf. During the weaning process, calves are exposed to various stressors that include removal from their dam, physiological changes (actively developing lean tissue or muscle), castration, vaccination, dehorning, exposure to novel pen or pasture environments, possible changes in feed and water sources, and for many spring-born calves, exposure to season climate changes.

Weaning calves reduces the nutrient requirements of the cow. It will allow the cow to transfer nutrients previously going to milk production to her own body function, improving her own condition and preparing for the next calving.

Cows that calve in moderate BCS (5 or 6) are able to recover, cycle and become pregnant sooner than cows that come through the winter in poor condition (less than 4). This is particularly important in young cows that have additional requirements of growth.

Weaning calves also reduces the amount of forage the herd will consume. For example:

- A nursing calf that is 4 months old or older normally consumes 1.4 to 2 % of his body weight (BW) in forage
- The lactating cow can consume 2.5 % of her BW or more
- A dry cow often will consume only 1.8 to 2.0% of her BW of forage.

Considering a 1200 lb. cow and a 350 lb. calf, forage consumed prior to weaning is around 37 lbs. of total forage per cow-calf pair, compared to 24 lbs. of total forage consumed by the weaned cow (assuming calves are sold or managed in a dry lot). As a consequence, profit generated by the ranch system as it relates to the weaning strategy adopted must include breeding efficiency, feed utilization (including grazed pasture/rangeland and winter harvested forage), calf performance, and marketability.

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### **Racing to the Finish – Soybean Maturity**

K-State Cropping Systems Specialist Dr. Ignacio Ciampitti recently shared research on the effects of stress conditions during soybean seed fill and final soybean yield. In it, he outlines how stresses like defoliation, disease, heat/moisture, etc... can reduce the duration of seed fill. In this study, a seven-day reduction in seed fill reduced yields by almost ten bushels per acre. It's a good reminder that there's a lot of yield to be determined as the growing season winds down, even if we may not be able to do much to affect it.

One facet of yield we *can* still affect, however, is harvest moisture. Soybean moisture often drops more quickly than we think (Ciampitti's work suggests in the neighborhood of three percent per day once beans reach 50-60 percent moisture), with harvest often occurring after the crop has dried to a moisture level two to four points lower than the 'optimum' 13 percent. It doesn't seem like much, but the loss of 'water' ultimately ends up as a loss of harvested bushels. Work done at the University of Nebraska (<https://cropwatch.unl.edu/harvest-soybeans-13-moisture>) illustrates this loss comparing a 60 bushel per acre yielding soybean crop at 13 percent (no pounds lost due to moisture correction) versus a 60 bushel per acre soybean crop at 10 percent – essentially giving up two pounds per acre. Different yields and prices change the numbers, but the bottom line is: losing moisture in the standing crop equals lost bushels.

To get ahead of moisture loss, consider harvesting at higher moisture levels, even though the crop may not look dry from the road (soybeans are fully mature when 95 percent of the pods are at their mature tan color). Moisture increases with dew and higher humidities. Harvest in less dry conditions can help retain moisture plus reduce harvest losses, too (four to five beans per square foot is approximately one bushel per acre). If storage and drying is an option, consider harvest at a higher moisture and aerating down to 13 percent.

Longer-term, run some numbers using the link above. It might surprise you how much yield is lost due to moisture and may help guide maturity and planting decisions for 2021.

### **Preparing the Vegetable Garden for *Next Year***

Some of your gardens may be done producing – and some of it you might have just given up on. If that's the case, now is a good time to start preparations for next year.

Begin by chopping/shredding residue in advance of tillage. If soils allow, perform tillage now to allow plant material to decompose, potentially reducing future insect/disease problems.

If increasing organic matter is a goal, consider a cover crop. Small grains like wheat should be seeded at one pound of seed per 1,000 square feet from mid-September to late October. Want something that will winter kill on its own? Spring oats can be seeded at a rate of two to four pounds per 1000 square feet. If you want a nitrogen-fixing crop, seed a legume like alfalfa through mid-September at one quarter to one-half pound per 1000 square feet.

It's never too early to start preparation for 2021. Use this fall window to get a head start.

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

### **Christmas Spending: Planning Ahead Matters**

As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, there are sixteen weekends until Christmas. Sixteen Saturdays to do all of your holiday shopping, gift wrapping, baking, and more. While it might seem fairly distant, it won't be long before our communities are adorned with holiday cheer and Christmas carols fill the airwaves. Your checkbook may still be recovering from back to school shopping, but it's not too early to start planning for Christmas.

Research shows that 22 percent of Americans believe their Christmas spending will leave them in debt and over 60 percent admit to buying their gifts less than a week before the holiday. By planning ahead and starting early, you can reduce the risk of going into debt this season. Here are a few tips to get you started on your holiday shopping.

1. Set your overall spending budget. If you are already struggling with debt, be careful

About how much you set to spend on Christmas gifts. Look at how much you spent last year. Is it reasonable to spend the same or even increase your budget, or do you need to cut your costs this year?

2. Make a list. Write down every person you plan to buy for this season and set a budget for how much to spend on each. From the company, office exchange to close family, don't leave anyone out. When you buy a gift, put it on the list along with the amount spent and adjust your overall budget accordingly.
3. Price check. One benefit to starting early is that you have time to track the regular selling price on those must-have items on your list and decide what constitutes a good "sale" price. When the Black Friday ads are released, you'll be ready to decide what are your go-to items based on the best sales. Finding the best deals will stretch your already set spending budget. If you have money left over, start your 2021 Christmas savings account.

Although I'm encouraging you to get a head start on holiday shopping, take time to enjoy the fall season. The cooler temperatures and changing leaves make it my most favorite season of the year.

Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

## **Maintain Routines for Children**

**Whether your children are heading into the new school year completely online, are in-person or a hybrid of the two, there's likely plenty of stress going around.** A K-State Research & Extension child development specialist, Bradford Wiles, encourages parents to maintain routines and to cut themselves a little slack during this incredibly challenging pandemic situation.

Wiles said it's particularly important that school-age children spend time interacting with their peers. "That is a huge element of what you're learning in those early years," he said. "We think about what we learn early on, and so often it is said that play is the work of early childhood. That's exactly what children need: they need to be able to play and interact. It makes a huge difference in their development."

The ongoing health threat of the COVID-19 pandemic may not make it possible for youth to be back to school full time, but every little bit helps, according to Wiles.

"Routines are critical for everything that we do," Wiles said. "Routines are critical for young children because it's how they reduce anxiety, knowing what to expect. That is gigantic in a young child's mind."

Wiles said parents are also their child's best teacher for some important life lessons. "Nobody who is living through this pandemic will ever forget this period of time," he said. "The thing that I want parents to understand is that they are also modeling how to handle adversity at this time, and they are modeling what good relationships look like."

When things get tense, and things are hard, how do you handle that? How do you work through that? How do you talk to your children, spouse, or other people in the household? Those are important elements.

Wiles noted that parents should not beat themselves up when things don't go as hoped. "We are going to make mistakes; everyone does," he said. "But we should remind ourselves that this is a very difficult time for all of us and our children are looking up to us. Whether you think they are paying attention to you or not, I promise you they are paying attention."

"You, as a parent, are their model for how things go. Recognizing that and doing your very best to model how to handle adversity is the best advice I can give any parent."