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Reboot for the Dummy Calf

We've all had them, the seemingly perfect-looking calf that is too "dumb" to nurse. There's nothing more frustrating than to get these critters to want to live. As they test your patience, I've heard myself say, "just die then." Of course, you can't let that happen.

Sometimes these "dummy" calves are clumsy, lethargic, and just weak. Many times they are the result of a traumatic birth or C-section. Many times they require tube feeding, which is never ideal. It seems like once they have an esophageal feeding tube feeding, they get even less likely to nurse.

As it turns out, there may be a simple, low-cost, and effective way to help them. The "Madigan Squeeze Technique" was developed by Dr. John Madigan, a veterinary professor, and equine neonatal health expert at the University of California-Davis. This technique was developed for "dummy" foals as part of his research. Madigan's theory is that when animals travel through the birth canal, it causes them a surge of hormones that shut down sedative neurosteroids that keep them calm in the womb. Because they are prey species, it's important for horses and cattle to make a quick switch to consciousness so that they can run from prey, within a few hours of birth.

The squeeze through the birth canal is thought to help flip a biochemical "on switch" that helps the calf transition quickly from sleep-like state in the womb to being alert and ready to flee. If, for some reason, this transition does not occur, the calf can remain quiet, depressed, and detached.

So the technique uses a long soft rope with three loops around the calf's chest. Once you've pulled on the rope to create pressure, the calf should lie down and get sort of sleepy. Keep them in this position for 20 minutes. Then remove the rope and help them to stand.

The Madigan squeeze may not save every calf, and it may need to be repeated several times throughout the first few days of life. It's just another tool in the toolbox that won't cost you anything to try!

I did try this technique, my own version at least. This calf was a normal delivery but a very quick delivery. The calf showed no interest in nursing. After fussing with the calf, my mother's udder was less than ideal. I tried the technique. I'm happy to report that the calf is nursing on his own now with no assistance. Was it the technique that saved him? I'm not sure, but glad that is over with.

David G. Hallauer
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Corn/Soybean Inputs: Sugar

As planting season approaches, all of the decisions we make to produce a bumper crop get put in to motion. Some of those decisions can impact yields in a big way – hybrid/variety selection come to mind. Others may be little things we try to coax that last little bit of yield out of a corn or soybean crop. One 'little thing' tried over time has been foliar applications of sugar.

Numerous studies have been conducted looking at sugar applications in field crops with mixed results. Studies at Ohio State showed no yield response in corn or soybeans. A group of field research studies in soybeans that included sites Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Minnesota looked at four different sugar sources, none of which yielded a significant yield response.

University of Nebraska's work on corn and soybeans showed inconsistent yield response results, but some years suggest some yield responses. They also looked at stalk strength benefits from sugar applications. Again, results were inconsistent but generally not significant.

Should sugar applications be ruled out completely? Maybe not, but research would suggest it likely won't be a significant yield-enhancing addition to spray mixes and likely won't warrant standalone applications. For links to these studies, see the Weekly News Articles section of the Crops and Soils tab at www.meadowlark.k-state.edu.

Tree Planting Rules

One of the more impressive displays at most garden centers is their selection of trees. If such a display has encouraged a tree-planting project, consider these tips for the best success.

Start with the right tree. Too many selections end up with unwanted fruit production or disease/insect pressures you never thought of. Check out our recommended plants resource: <http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/recommended-plants/index.html>. If your garden store has its own nurseryman, they are a great source of information as well.

Keep trees well-watered and in a shady location prior to planting. Never remove by grabbing the trunk. Always lift by the root ball or pot. If there are wires/labels/cords on the tree that can cause girdling, remove them. Finally, remove just enough soil to locate the root flare.

A properly sized hole is important. Dig holes deep enough so trees sit slightly above nursery level on solid ground (not fill dirt). Planting width should be three times the width of the root ball, with soil loosened to five times the root ball diameter for faster root spreading.

Once the hole is in place, remove all containers as best you can. Some wire baskets can't be removed and should be cut back as much as possible and rolled in to the hole. If roots have been circling in the container, cut and fluff them out, so they do not result in girdling later.

Backfill the hole with the same soil you removed. No amendments or fertilizer are necessary. Add water as you fill to ensure good root to soil contact and prevent air pockets.

Tree leaf buds release hormones that encourage root growth. To encourage as much root growth as possible, don't cut back branches after planting unless they are rubbing or damaged.

Water deeply then once a week for the first season (if we don't get enough rain). Mulching will help with water retention (and reduce competition) when added to a depth of two to four inches. It should cover an area two to three times the diameter of the root ball.

Don't stake the tree unless absolutely necessary. Unstaked trees tend to establish more quickly and grow faster if they are not staked. Movement is necessary to strengthen the trunk.

Cindy Williams
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Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Smart Uses for Your Tax Refund and/or Stimulus Check

Whether your tax fund is \$500 or \$3,500, it can mean a real impact on your personal and financial well-being. Before you spend your refund on a big-screen TV or iPad, try to think through your options, even the ones that aren't especially exciting or glamorous.

Consider three general rules:

- *DO plan ahead before spending your refund. Without a plan, you may use the money on the first important that comes to mind and then later realize something else was more important. Planning ahead and involving the family increase the chances you will identify all the possibilities and think about which are most important.
- *DO devote a portion of your tax refund to build long-term financial security.
- *DON'T throw away of your refund on loan fees---"quick refund" companies are just giving you a high-cost loan!

Here are four smart uses for your money:

Pay off bills---

- *First priority regular monthly bills (utilities, phone) if you have gotten behind.
- *Other bills prioritized with the highest interest rates paid off first.

Save for needs in the coming year:

- *Emergency Funds---Try to have enough to cover a couple of months should you have an emergency, such as medical expenses or car repair, or lose your job.
- *Occasional Expenses---Avoid big bills, such as holiday spending, by building savings now!

Long-term Savings—

- *Save for goals such as a dream vacation, home, or retirement.
- *Small amounts add up. Putting \$500 a year into an IRA can yield \$68,100 after 30 years.
- *Moderate-income workers contributing to retirement accounts may qualify for Tax credit.

Special Purchases---

- *Once you have taken care of the basics, consider that new refrigerator, sofa or TV.
- *These may be essential or can be delayed until you have saved for that specific item.

Building a Yearlong Habit!

Making good use of your tax refund and/or stimulus check feels great. You can experience that same sense of accomplishment all-year-round!

A tax refund or Stimulus check is not your only opportunity to make financial progress toward your goals. Every week you have opportunities to improve your financial well-being.

If you don't think you can come up with any extra money each month, look again. You may be able to plug a few spending leaks and "find" some money!

Once you've found some extra funds, you can use that money to:

- *Keep bills paid up
- *Pay off debt early
- *Build financial security
- *Keep saving—whether you're saving for retirement, college, or something else even a little bit makes a difference.

Do you find yourself in a yearly cycle? Do you receive a tax refund and/or stimulus check, catch up, then get more and more behind throughout the year until next tax season? Here are two options to consider:

- *Put more in your paycheck by changing your withholding (form W-4) and claiming more exemptions.
- *If you qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit, you can request to receive part of it throughout the year (request form W-5 from your employer).

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Comforter and Bedding Cleaning

After a long day, the feeling of a cozy bed is so satisfying. But over time, sweat, body oil, and allergens like dust mites can start to build up. The American Cleaning Institute® recommends these steps to keep your bedding clean and comfortable.

Bed sheets and pillowcases should be washed at least every two weeks. If you sweat a lot at night or are more sensitive to dust, once a week is recommended.

While most sheets and pillowcases can be machine washed, some specialty fabrics may require specific cleaning considerations, so always check the fabric care label first. Wash then air dry or tumble dry.

Even with pillowcases, pillows can still harbor dead skin and allergens. To keep pillows at their best, wash them every three months.

Most pillows can be cleaned in the washing machine, but again, you should always read the label first in case the pillows require special care. Foam pillows, for example, often can't be machine washed because the agitation may break up the padding. In this case, if the pillows have removable covers, the covers can be washed according to the instructions on the label.

Generally, pillows can be machine washed on a gentle cycle. Washing two pillows at a time can help keep the washer balanced.

If the label instructions say it's safe to do so, you can machine dry the pillows. Adding a few tennis balls or periodically removing the pillows and fluffing them can help prevent clumping and promote even drying.

Blankets, including the weighted kind, and comforters should be washed monthly. If there's a removable cover, then you can wash the cover monthly and get away with washing the blanket itself two to four times a year.

Always read the label and follow the instructions. Usually, blankets and comforters can be machine washed on a gentle cycle. The capacity of your washer will determine whether this can be done at home or if you'll need to go to a laundromat.

Then machine dry on low heat or lay flat to air dry. Putting a towel in the dryer can help the blanket or comforter dry more evenly. You can also periodically stop the dryer to fluff the blanket or comforter a few times.

If there's a stain, pre-treat it with a stain remover before washing and check to make sure it's entirely gone before machine drying. Also, make sure the comforter is fully dry before using or storing it so it doesn't become susceptible to mildew. Use multiple low heat cycles if necessary.