

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Urea and Cool Season Forages

It's the season for cool season grass nitrogen applications. As you make evaluations regarding nitrogen rate/product/timing to these forages, the mechanisms surrounding losses when applying urea are a common – and justifiable – concern.

Put very simply: nitrogen losses from surface applications of urea to cool season forages is a possibility. Potential losses are complicated to a degree by lots of factors, but there's just more loss potential (via volatilization) from urea than there is from ammonium nitrate or ammonium sulfate for example. If urea is the only option we have, however, or if a price point dictates it's our best buy, understanding under what conditions N loss occurs with urea or urea containing products like UAN can be important

For starters, losses will generally occur with warmer temperatures and moist soils. Under dry conditions or when temperatures are cooler, little urea loss is expected. IF ideal loss conditions do occur, losses seldom exceed 20 percent of the surface applied product.

Second, it takes (ideally) about a half inch or more of moisture to get urea in to the soil profile and eliminate loss potential. During periods of high N loss potential, rainfall should occur within 24 hours. As long as soils aren't frozen and moisture is ample to move product in to the profile, losses are minimized.

Third, inhibitors may be available to help reduce urea loss potential. Urease inhibitors can delay loss processes, providing an opportunity for rainfall to incorporate urea in to the soil.

Fourth, forage crops tend to have a soil surface covered with decomposed litter that may increase the potential for nitrogen (as urea) loss via volatilization. Surface litter can also result in tie-up (other N sources could be affected in this manner as well) of nitrogen.

Bottom line: in most well drained soils in Kansas, there is little loss from urea when applied in an appropriate time – typically November through early March. Still, potential loss mechanisms have to be considered when urea is used, and application management options should be considered so urea can be applied when it can be the most effective and economical.

2021 Tomato Trials

Each year, Master Gardeners from Kansas and Missouri, on collaboration with each state's respective Extension Horticulture programs plant and rate a number of tomato varieties. Trials are conducted in multiple locations across each state, with one of this year's trials being hosted by the Meadowlark Extension District Master Gardeners.

The trials are a good way to look at varieties that will perform well in this region. Missouri recently ranked their top 10 varieties based on pounds of fruit harvested per plant are, with the following coming in at the top: Anna Russian, Cherokee Purple, German Johnson, Beef Master, Early Girl, Big Boy, Brandywine Black, Jet Star, Celebrity, and Big Beef.

More information on KSU's trials will be shared as they are available in the near future. Trials vary by county/region, but as you're looking through garden calendars this winter, these are certainly some options to consider.

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

Organize and Simplify Your Kitchen

During the winter months it is not uncommon to want to re-do or organize our space. One place to start is with the kitchen. If your kitchen has limited space, it is a challenge to store items efficiently and to find items that can multi-task. Here are some ideas to get you start on your kitchen organizing project this winter:

- Use a wall-mounted shelf with pegs to hold décor or cookbooks on the shelf, and pot holders or towels on the pegs.
- Mount a paper towel dispenser on the side or under a cabinet to free up counter space.
- Use desktop organizers to hold lids, flat dishes, small utensils.
- Use over-the-door shoe organizer to hold foil, wax paper, plastic wrap or other lightweight small items. This frees up shelf space.
- For buffets, use canisters, canning jars, empty oatmeal boxes to organize cutlery and napkins.
- Many baskets are inexpensive and they can help organize and decorate at the same time.
- Hang a spice rack on the wall or cabinet for easy access and to save counter space.
- Have plastic containers without lids? Use them to store utensils vertically instead of taking up drawer space.
- Need an extra cooling rack? Turn over a muffin pan to set a hot pan of brownies on to cool.
- What is a serving size of spaghetti? Use an empty bottle with one-inch diameter opening. This will equal two servings.
- Use a salad spinner to clean your leafy greens and to store them in the refrigerator and keep excess moisture at bay.
- Having trouble opening that jar of pickles? Wrap rubber bands around the lid for a better grip.
- Taking a pita sandwich on the run for lunch? Keep hands clean with a coffee filter wrap.
- Use coffee filters for disposable bowls to serve popcorn or snacks.

Hope this helps to bring some organization to your kitchen this winter.