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District Extension Agent  
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

### **Weed/Brush Control Practices**

University of Missouri researchers surveyed 66 pastures between 2015 and 2017 looking at the average number of weeds per acre. Annual broadleaf weeds led the way, peaking at close to an estimated 7,500 weeds per acre. Perennial broadleaf weeds were a close second, peaking at an estimated 5,000 weeds per acre. Total weed pressure (the sum of annual and perennial grasses and broadleaves plus sedge species) reached almost 20,000 weeds per acre.

While weed numbers were plenty high, weed pressure distribution added another angle to weed management efforts. Annual broadleaf weed pressure jumped early and remained steady through the growing season. In contrast, annual grasses weren't prevalent until late summer.

Weeds don't behave in a way to make control a one-shot process, requiring an integrated approach instead. It can be difficult to know what that might look like, however, and that's where a reference in the *2023 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide* might be of value.

At the front of the **25** pages dedicated to pasture and rangeland brush/weed control is a chart listing our common forage land weeds. In addition to dividing them by growth cycle (annual/biennial/etc...), it also gives control efficacy ratings by mechanical means (mowing, cutting, etc...), burning, and herbicide programs. It's not a one stop control shop, but it *can* be a start towards enhancing an integrated control management program for grassland acreages.

If you're interested in taking a first look at integrated control options, hard copies of the *2023 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide* are now available from any Meadowlark Extension District Office. To look at specific sections or to download a full digital copy, visit <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/CHEMWEEEDGUIDE.pdf>.

### **Truth or Myth – Pesticide Toxicity**

A quick look at lawn and garden pesticide product labels can help us understand how a product works and how it's used, but it can take some deeper research to find out more about product characteristics. Pesticide toxicity is one characteristic that can be difficult to understand.

For example, a label stating a product is synthetic or organic doesn't tell the full story of product toxicity. All pesticides, whether from a lab or a living organism, are toxic. The EPA rates toxicity on what's known as its LD50. The lower the number, the more toxic the pesticide.

There are numerous examples of synthetic products as well as organic ones that have low toxicity ratings. Likewise, there are products from both sources of origin exhibiting higher toxicities as well. It takes a little label searching, but if you are after toxicity numbers, looking for that LD50 is one of the first things you should do.

Pesticide purchasers should always read and follow product labels to ensure products are applied correctly to the right crops - but don't stop there. Pesticide safety – for you personally and the environment around you – is an important consideration as well. Look for an LD50 number to help you evaluate potential product safety risks.

One really nice resource for anyone interested in pesticide use and management is the National Pesticide Information Center at: <http://npic.orst.edu/about.html>. They provide objective, science-based information about pesticides and pesticide-related topics to enable people to make informed decisions about pesticides and their use. They're a great resource if you are trying to learn more about pesticides and their use.

## Ross Mosteller

District Extension Agent  
Livestock & Natural Resources

### **How Far Should Cattle Walk to Water?**

The topic of watering livestock is one that we most often think about in the hot summer months, but in reality, access to a good water source is important year-round. The winter months can pose an issue in water availability, as water sources freeze up and/or livestock don't want to leave areas of protection. Additionally, this year a person can drive about anywhere in Kansas now and see farm ponds that are dry or very low. While that is discouraging on one hand, it provides opportunity on the other. So, let's take a look at livestock watering in pasture settings.

Behaviorally, cattle tend to water as a group, this is a pattern that is much more pronounced when the distance to water is greater than 1/4-mile away. Range and livestock professionals recommend that animals not be forced to travel more than 1/2 to 3/4 of a mile to water in rough terrain and no more than 1 to 1 1/2 miles on level terrain. This is obviously more of a problem in larger pastures, but water location is a critical link to a total management system in any pasture. Ideally, animals should not have to travel more than 800-900 feet to water.

The significance of the whole herd watering at the same time is that tanks need a lot of capacity to facilitate that behavior. In addition, the water device needs sufficient perimeter to handle at least 10% of the group watering at once. For example, if we have 100 cows in our group, the water tank needs a minimum of 20 ft. of water access, or a 6-ft. diameter tank. This is a conservative measure, as the group size at watering is in a typically a much higher percentage.

The tank also should hold a minimum of 25% of the herd's daily water intake or 500 gals (100 cows X 20 g/h/d), which would require a 10-ft.-diameter tank that is 2.5 ft. deep. Remember tank sizes can be adjusted, just keep in mind volume and gallons. If cattle have to travel less than 900 ft. to water, they tend to water individually or in small groups of 2-5 head. This reduces the cost for the water system in terms of tank capacity and water delivery rate. The size of this pasture would be roughly 9 acres if water is located in a corner. If water is located at the mid-point along a fence line, then the pasture could be up to 13 acres in size and still keep the four corners within 900 ft. of water.

The point about location is a very valid one to consider. Oftentimes in pastures the water, mineral/salt, fly-control, and possibly creep feeder among other things, are located in a corner of the pasture. Many times, this is at a point of easy access to the cattle manager, close to an entry gate for the pasture. One of my former college professors referred to this as the "Aggieville" of a pasture. Having "Aggieville" in the corner is counterproductive to grazing distribution. Through the use of some planning and plumbing, this point can be divided into separate areas with a more central location for watering systems, which helps better utilize pasture resources.

Keep in mind that how far cattle walk to water is highly dependent on the levels of performance a producer wants to achieve. The less effort cattle exert in traveling back and forth to water, the better they will perform. Producers must evaluate if the cost of providing close-by water can be paid for with increased production. If you want more from your pastures and grazing herd, adding or changing water sources can be a good investment.

Ideally, water systems should provide animals the ability to drink from a tank or fountain and not allow them to enter the water source; if a pond, stream or spring is utilized. This is one benefit of dry weather and low ponds, this gives opportunity to clean out silted in ponds, fence out the renovated pond and incorporate watering systems that move water out of the pond, into tanks. Not only is there a benefit to animals who don't have to physical travel greater distances, but improved water quality from these developments is notable too! If you'd like to learn more, the publication "Watering Systems for Serious Graziers" is a great reference, <http://kerrcenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/stelprdb1144213.pdf>

## Teresa Hatfield

District Extension Agent  
Family and Community Wellness

### Medicare Changes in 2023

If you are a current Medicare beneficiary or just going onto Medicare, there are some changes you will need to keep in mind for 2023.

- **Cost**

The cost of the Medicare Part B premium will be \$164.90 per month per person for most people. If your modified adjusted gross income on your 2021 tax return as an individual was \$97,000 or greater or as a married couple was \$194,000 or greater, you may have to pay more for your Part B premium. The Part B annual deductible will be \$226 (you only have to pay this once for the whole year).

- **Enrollment**

The Medicare Enrollment periods start dates are more straightforward in 2023. To enroll in Medicare, you must fall into an enrollment period to sign up for coverage. The first enrollment period most people will see is the Initial Enrollment Period (IEP). This period runs seven months surrounding your eligibility month for Medicare (three months before your eligibility month and three months after your eligibility month). However, if you were born on the first day of the month, your IEP will start the month before your birth month. The start date of your Medicare will depend on which month you sign up. If you sign up three months before your Medicare begins, your Medicare will start the month you are first eligible. If you sign up the month you are eligible, your Medicare will start the first day of the following month. If you sign up the last three months of eligibility, your Medicare will start the first day of the month after you signed up for Medicare. People eligible for Medicare also have the General Enrollment Period every year from January 1 to March 31 to sign up; however, depending on your situation, you may have to pay a late enrollment penalty. The Medicare Special Enrollment Period (SEP) allows people with particular circumstances to enroll outside the initial and general enrollment periods.

- **Insulin**

As of January 2023, Part D-covered insulin co-pays are capped at \$35 per month for each type of insulin, with no deductible. You will still need to ensure your plan covers your insulin; in other words, it must be on your plan's formulary. Medical supplies used to administer your insulin (syringes, fillable pens) can also be covered by your Part D plan as long as they are on the plan formulary. Starting in July 2023, if you use an insulin pump, the insulin used in the pump will cost \$35 per month under Medicare Part B.

- **Vaccinations**

Medicare Part D vaccinations will be covered at 100% without a deductible in 2023. Coverage includes vaccinations such as the Shingrix shot for Shingles. In the past, this vaccination was subject to Part D deductible and co-insurance. Vaccinations such as flu, pneumonia, hepatitis B, and COVID-19 vaccinations are still covered under Medicare Part B.

### New to Medicare

Medicare has evolved over the years and is unique among all other types of health insurance. Understanding the basics of Medicare can be pretty tricky. If you, a spouse, or a family member is going to be eligible for Medicare in the near future, the "Medicare Options Class" might be helpful. This class will be held in an online format. You will have to register for the class to participate. This class will discuss Original Medicare, Medicare Advantage Plans, Medigap insurance, and Medicare Prescription drug covers.

You will learn the following:

- What Medicare is and how it works

January 20, 2023

- Coverage and cost of the different types of plans
- Enrollment and eligibility
- Tools to help you make a decision
- Other programs that can help pay for Medicare costs

When: February 15 at 6:00 PM

Where: Online Zoom

Contact the Meadowlark Extension District at 785-364-4125 to sign up for the class and receive your Zoom link.

## Cindy Williams

District Extension Agent  
Family & Community Wellness

### **Stock Your Pantry the MED Way**

The Mediterranean way of eating emphasizes a lot of fruits and vegetables. There are a variety of options to achieve this goal.

Fresh fruits and vegetables choices change throughout the year based on growing season. But, many of these same foods are available in frozen, canned, or dried forms year around. Look for plain frozen fruits and vegetables without added flavors or sauces. Choose canned products without added salt for vegetables or canned in their own juice for fruit. Dried fruits can be eaten as is or can be rehydrated.

Fresh or frozen fish options are few in some locations. But canned tuna or salmon, packed in water or olive oil, are good choices.

Don't have fresh herbs? There are many dried herbs available to use instead. A general substitution is  $\frac{1}{4}$  dried ground = 1 teaspoon dried whole/crumbled = 1 tablespoon fresh chopped.

If certain foods are not available in your local grocery store, ask the manager to order the item. You may not be the only person looking for it and it could become a regular item on the shelf.

### **Bitter Taste Could Be in Your Genes**

While we encourage consumers to eat healthy vegetables, such as broccoli, cabbage, and brussels sprouts, to some, the bitterness will turn up their nose.

Turns out, this could be genetic. Researchers at the University of Kentucky School of Medicine discovered that we all inherit two copies of the TAS2R38 taste gene. There are two variants of this gene, the AVI and PAV variants. If you have two copies of the AVI variant, you are not as sensitive to bitter flavors in those foods. If you have one of each variant, you perceive bitter flavors in the same foods. If you have two PAV variants, you are a "super-taster" and those foods will be very bitter and inedible.