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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Alfalfa Weevil Emergence Begins

According to the Kansas Mesonet Alfalfa Weevil Growing Degree Day (GDD) Calculator (<https://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/degreedays/>) scouting for weevils should begin at 150-180 GDDs (eggs hatch as early as 25 GDDs). We've reached that point in Northeast Kansas with GDD's ranging from 112 at Hiawatha to 190 at Silver lake (Corning, Oskaloosa, and Rossville are all points between) – and sure enough, weevils were found in early sampling last week in the southern regions of the Meadowlark Extension District.

In comparison to historical data for this time of year, GDDs are 80-100 units ahead of normal. Because of this GDD accumulation, alfalfa weevil damage should be monitored to make sure alfalfa growth is staying ahead of weevil damage.

Will cold snaps do any damage to weevils? Maybe. If young alfalfa weevils are exposed to temperatures in the teens and 20's for long periods, it's possible some mortality will occur. Typically, however, they do a pretty good job of hiding in plant terminals and debris and are generally protected unless temperatures take a pretty significant drop.

Weevil damage monitoring will continue through early spring. If you want to receive regular weevil damage reports via e-mail, contact me. I'll provide regular reports on feeding pressure from sites monitored through the District.

Rust – on Pears?

We're pretty familiar with cedar apple rust, but if you notice those same types of yellow-orange spots on leaves of ornamental or fruiting pear trees, it's probably cedar-hawthorn rust. Very similar to cedar apple rust (control is the same), it typically results mostly in aesthetic damage. That means it's considered a nuisance rather than a significant harm to the tree, rendering control optional and only recommended if the tree experiences substantial leaf drop.

If you've had issues in the past and don't want to risk further damage, know that control must be applied *preventatively*. Once symptoms show on leaves, it's too late with the fungus only active in April-May. Typical 'control' programs call for application of a fungicide every 7-10 days from the first of April through the end of May (they don't last all spring). Fungicides have to be present on foliage prior to disease spore germination to be effective.

Want to try and avoid spraying that often? Consider using a fungicide containing the active ingredient myclobutanil (Immunox, Immunox Plus, or Fertilome F-Stop Lawn & Garden Spray). Myclobutanil will kill rust spores up to four days after germination. With this four-day kickback, you can wait until you see spores (orange globs/galls on junipers) being released before you spray. Spores will generally only develop during rainy, spring weather.

What about the juniper host of the juniper to pear spore exchange? Rust actually has a minimal effect on junipers, so no control is need to protect juniper or cedar trees.

Ross Mosteller

District Extension Agent
Livestock & Natural Resources

Chicks; More Than a Secular Easter Icon

This time of year gardeners get anxious to plant, spring break travelers enjoy warmer climates and poultry keepers catch “chick fever”. While this can be a rewarding and self-sustaining venture, planning and preparation is key to success! I get it, it’s hard to walk past the chick pens at the local farm supply store and not take some of those cheeping, fluffy, egg-makers home; but make sure you know what you’re getting into and be prepared.

Know your intended outcome in raising chickens before you even begin to think about types, colors and quantity. With recent spikes in egg prices and more limited egg supplies, you might notice that hatcheries are experiencing strong demand and more limited supplies of chicks as well. This might cause you to rethink particular chick breeds you like, so discussion starts with what is the right breed or hybrid for your situation? Sourcing “ready to lay” pullets might be a good option, if you are looking for egg layers, but focus today will be on baby chicks. Plan to keep one age of bird in a flock at one time, sourced from the same hatchery, for best success.

Basic categories are egg layers, meat producers, dual purpose and “fancy” types geared more toward exhibition. If you only want eggs, look at pullets in the egg laying hybrids - such as sex-links (*in various colors*) and leghorn influenced crosses. Needing a quick protein source and not eggs? Meat-type broilers, such as Cornish Rock crosses, are your best choice. Many backyard flocks utilize dual purpose straight runs, who supply both meat and eggs. Popular breeds include: Rhode Island Reds, Wyandotte, Rocks, Orpington, Ameraucana, to name a few.

After your breed or hybrid has been selected, sourcing becomes the next topic. Always select chicks from sources that are reputable, have NPIP testing and other health assurances granted; and you might even consider additional vaccinations to prevent diseases. Direct shipment from a known hatchery is often the best idea to minimize health risk. Hatcheries generally supply all the above, plus live chick guarantees. Most local farm supply stores source chicks directly from hatcheries as well, so this can be a good choice too. This does come with more potential disease exposure due to whatever people might unintentionally bring into a store.

Chicks will need an artificial heat source, in a draft free environment, providing 90-95 degrees Fahrenheit the first week. This temperature can be reduced by 5 degrees per week, until reaching a constant 65-70 degrees. Floor space starts out at one half square foot per bird moving up to two or more square footage as adults. Adequate feeder and waterer space from day one is a must! Flat feeders and/or troughs should be used for the first six weeks. High protein, complete, balanced feed should be used. Fresh, cool, water with electrolytes for the first few weeks is a good idea as well. Pine shavings/chips make a good bedding source and should be kept fresh.

After that, daily care and inspection now becomes the most important aspect. Watch to make sure chicks are eating, drinking, remaining thermally comfortable by not piling up, and don’t show any signs of sickness or disease. Healthy chicks should be active and alert. Signs of sickness or disease can be lethargic, droopy chicks, chicks who can’t stand, coughing, sneezing, watery eyes, labored breathing and sadly - dead chicks. When disease is suspected, get a reliable diagnosis and start treatment. Note that the number of veterinarians specializing in poultry is limited, but vets should be your go-to source for health questions and concerns.

Hopefully if you plan, prepare and follow all the steps discussed, you can have great success with a thriving poultry flock. You will have a source of meat in 8-24 weeks and eggs in 18-24 weeks. One thing to remember is that if you’ve not been used to daily chores, you will have them now! Be prepared to enjoy the benefits of poultry, but also the daily work that comes with it. Additional information can be found in the KSRE publication: [Management of the Small Flock of Chickens](#), MF-2390.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent
Family and Community Wellness

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. This month, the Meadowlark Extension District and the Colorectal Cancer Alliance urge everyone to visit [getscreened.org](https://www.getscreened.org) to learn more about colorectal cancer symptoms, risk factors, and screening options.

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second deadliest and the fourth most common form of cancer in the U.S. According to the CDC and the American Cancer Society, an estimated 153,020 people in the U.S. and 1,366 Kansans will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year. The average lifetime risk of developing CRC is 1 in 24. Most people are diagnosed with CRC after age 50, but the rate of young-onset CRC is increasing. Non-Hispanic Black people have the second-highest mortality rate and the second-highest incidence rate of CRC in the U.S. Native Americans and Alaskan Native communities face the highest mortality and incidence rates.

CRC starts in the colon or rectum when the body's cells grow uncontrollably. Most cancers of this type begin as a growth called a polyp which can change into cancer over time. Early detection is critical. CRC is one of the most preventable cancers and is highly treatable when detected early. Most people should begin screening for CRC at age 45. People at higher risk, including those with symptoms, a family history of CRC, and specific inherited genetic syndromes like Lynch syndrome, may need to get checked earlier. Everyone should speak with their healthcare provider about when and how to get checked. Most people have screening options, including colonoscopy, stool-DNA, and FIT (fecal immunochemical test). If you have an abnormal/positive stool-DNA or FIT results will require a follow-up colonoscopy. You may be able to complete Some screening options at home.

- **Know the risk factors and practice prevention:** More than half of colorectal cancer in the U.S. are associated with lifestyle risk factors that you can change. You should exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight, don't smoke, drink alcohol in moderation, and eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole-grain fiber, and calcium. A family history of CRC, specific genetic syndromes, chronic inflammatory bowel disease, and type 2 diabetes are also risk factors.
- **Watch for symptoms and act:** CRC can develop silently, so there may be no symptoms until it has advanced to later and more deadly stages. This is why it is essential to get screened. Symptoms include changing bowel habits, rectal bleeding, abdominal discomfort, weakness or fatigue, and unexplained weight loss. If you experience these symptoms, speak with a healthcare provider immediately.
- **Get screened:** Screening can prevent colorectal cancer by detecting and removing precancerous polyps. Screening can also detect cancer early when treatment is usually more successful. People at average risk should start at age 45, and those at higher risk may need to get checked earlier.

Please share with those you care about the importance of screening for Colorectal cancer; it could save their lives. For more information on Colorectal cancer, check out the following resources.

Colorectal Cancer Alliance: www.ccalliance.org
Screening Quiz: quiz.getscreened.org
The American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent
Family & Community Wellness

Microgreens Pack a Punch

“Microgreens” is a marketing term used to describe tiny, tender; edible greens that germinate in soil or a soil substitute from the seeds of vegetables and herbs. Smaller than “baby greens,” and harvested later than “sprouts,” microgreens can provide a variety of leaf flavors, such as sweet and spicy. They are also known for their various colors and textures. Amon upscale markets, they are now considered a specialty genre of greens that are good for garnishing salads, soups, plates, and sandwiches.

USDA Agricultural Research Service researchers determined the concentration of essential vitamins and carotenoids in 25 commercially available varieties of microgreens. Key nutrients measured were ascorbic acid (vitamin C), tocopherols (vitamin E), phyloquinone (vitamin A precursor), plus other related carotenoids in the cotyledons.

In general, microgreens contained considerable higher levels of vitamins and carotenoids---about five times greater---than their mature plant counterparts, an indication that microgreens may be worth the trouble of delivering them fresh during their short lives.

Testing Pressure Canners

Canning season is approaching so now is the time to evaluate equipment. One important evaluation is the accuracy of dial gauge pressure canners.

Presto Testing Units from National Presto Industries, Inc. can be used on a few brands. They include:

- *National
- *Magic Seal
- *Maid of Honor
- *Presto

The tester should not be used on All American canner gauges or any other brand of canners. Testing can be done at anyone of the three Meadowlark Extension District Offices located at Oskaloosa, Holton or Seneca. Be sure to call ahead to see when would be a good time to bring in the lid, with gauge attached, for testing. There is no charge for this service and dial gauges need to be tested each year.

While you are at the Extension office, be sure to pick up the latest K-State publications on preserving a variety of fruits, vegetables, meats and more! Any food preservation older than 1994 is consider outdated and should not be used. These publications have the latest recommendations for preserving foods.

If you have any food preservation questions, contact me at 785-863-2212 or at csw@ksu.edu . The Meadowlark Extension District will be teaching a Jams and Jellies Workshop in late June, at all three locations—Holton, Seneca and Oskaloosa. Focus will be on low/no-sugar, reduced sugar and more. If you are interested, please let us know as more details will be coming out soon. This will be a hands-on workshop where participants will take home products that they make. Registration numbers will be limited.