

## David Hallauer

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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

### Planting When It's Cool

When should we start, and when should we stop? Those are two questions asked this time of year when conditions seem okay for planting (or the calendar says they should be) – until all of a sudden they're not. It's then we might question whether the planter should still be running.

There are a couple of types of 'injury' that occur around planting. One is imbibitional chilling. It occurs when there is a change in *water* temperature as the seed is taking its first drink in the first six to 24 hours after planting. Water temperatures attributed to imbibitional chilling are generally 45 degrees F and lower and often associated with colder temperatures and rainfall in that early period after planting. The second is cold injury. This is more common *after* the first 24 hours post planting and mostly with *soil* temperatures dropping in to the low 40's and below.

In reality, whether its cold injury or imbibitional chilling is much less relevant than the possible result (NOTE: cold injury is *typically* less severe than imbibitional chilling damage). We may see seeds with reduced vigor or even seedling death, with damage levels dependent on the level of temperature drop, how long cold temperatures persist, and seed quality to start with.

Good agronomic practices (high quality hybrids/varieties, planting when forecast conditions are favorable for early growth, etc...) will help overcome many of the cold weather/ soil issues we face. Still, early planted fields deserve extra scouting as they emerge so stand decisions can be made before it's too late. We have to balance the acres we have to cover with the weather we have to do it in, but an understanding of how cold injury works can mean the difference between stopping a little early – and a complete do over.

### Evergreens Not Green

As everything tries to start greening up this time of year, sometimes plants that are supposed to remain green are actually going backwards. The explanations are numerous.

Some of the brown could be disease. This is particularly true of pine species exhibiting pine wilt or tip blight. Evaluate pines now. If it's tip blight, consider a fungicide treatment (sometimes it's too late, but...). If it's pine wilt, it's time to get trees removed and discarded.

If the damage is on semi-evergreen shrubs like euonymus and boxwood, it may be the result of sudden temperature drops last fall. If moisture has been adequate, most of this damage is likely foliar only and buds will be fine (if drier conditions persisted, the damage could be worse). Monitor through spring (in to mid-May) giving plants a chance to develop new growth. You can also split buds. If green inside, there's still hope for new growth.

If the discoloration is on junipers, it may be natural. The male flowers of eastern redcedar, etc... are brownish and look like a cross between a miniature hand grenade and a pinecone. Shaking branches on dry days may result in the release of a pollen cloud. If seeing the discoloration on only half of the trees, its might be the male flowers and should fade with time.

Still not sure? Drop us a line and we'll discuss even more options.

## Ross Mosteller

District Extension Agent  
Livestock & Natural Resources

### Successful Horse Grazing

Last week I attended the Livestock Learning Roadshow in Holton to listen to Jim Gerrish speak about livestock grazing topics. Someone in the crowd asked about multi-species grazing and specifically included horses in the discussion. The response basically said that horses (*all equids really*) are a different animal when it comes to grazing, a point that I wholeheartedly agree with. Today let's take a look at some basics of pasture considerations for horses.

Many times, a call comes into the Extension office to “get better pasture” for horses. When questioned on the animals to land ratio, it often is something like “I’ve got three horses and thee acres”, a situation doomed from the start. No one really wants to hear they need to get rid of two of those horses or triple the landmass to make this have any chance of success, but it is often the solution. An acreage will be over-grazed because landowners simply have too many horses for the amount of land they own. Horse owners need to have a basic understanding of how horses graze, the requirements they have and the amount of land needed, before grazing horses successfully.

The major impacts of overgrazing are reduced plant production and increased bare ground. This can lead to weed problems, wind and water erosion, soil compaction and reduced soil fertility. Altogether it likely means less available forage for livestock and may even create nutritional deficiencies for the animals that are grazing the area. There are three questions horse owners should ask themselves to determine if their land is being overused. They are:

1. Is the productivity of your grass starting to decline or dominate grass species changing?
2. Do you notice an increase in the amount of bare ground and/or weeds?
3. Are you buying excessive amounts of feed to supplement horses year-round?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you likely need to evaluate the number of horses your land can support. To help prevent overgrazing, horse owners need to understand the horse's requirements. These include exercise, shelter for inclement weather, fresh water (8-12 gallons/day) and feed – about 30 pounds of grass or hay per day. Another thing about horses to note is that they are continuous grazers. This means that if grass/forage is presented in front of them, they will eat. Basic strategies to protect your grass include:

- Rotational grazing, where existing pastures are cross-fenced into smaller paddocks to rotate horses through; or
- Limit grazing, where horses are let out to graze for short periods, one or two times daily. Additionally, you may consider developing exercise paddocks, for exercise only.

In devising the grazing system that fits your situation, it is important to remember that timing of grazing and REST are two critical components. Grazing systems can work to prevent overgrazing and, in some instances, increase grazing capacity. Landowners can rotationally graze on any size & scale. Two, three or four pastures/paddocks are better than one pasture that is continuously grazed season long. Use electric fence and polywire to divide pasture into smaller areas. Make sure horses are familiar with an electric fence system before getting too elaborate with the design. Water systems tends to be a limiting factor.

The biggest thing to keep in mind is that the size of the acreage will limit the number of horses that can be kept, no matter the rotational system. Also, type and quality of forage on that land influences the number of horses. All of these things need to be considered, before investment in the animal. For more information on this subject as well and other horse related issues, contact your local Extension office or visit the Horse Resource website: <http://www.extension.org/horses>

## Teresa Hatfield

District Extension Agent  
Family and Community Wellness

### **National Take a Walk in the Park Day**

Thursday, March 30th, is National Take a Walk in the Park Day. This day encourages us to get active and get outdoors. Walking in the park is a great way to relieve stress, get moving, and enjoy nature's beauty. It's also a great way to exercise without spending much money. All you need is comfortable clothing and perhaps a walking partner (human or canine).

Walking provides many benefits to our health. Walking can help you reduce the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. Walking also helps to strengthen your bones and muscles and allows you to maintain a healthy weight. Other benefits include reducing stress, lifting your mood, easing joint pain, and boosting your immune system. There are also benefits to getting outdoors and taking a walk. People who walk outdoors also report better mental health.

We have been enjoying the benefits of parks for quite some time. Parks in the medieval ages were designed for game hunting. The 16th-century game transformed reserves into landscape parks around houses or mansions. The Boston Common, designated as a public open space in 1634, is considered the nation's first city park. The largest National Park in the United States is Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

Wrangell-St. Elias Park is home to over 13 million acres of land. This park is larger than Yosemite and Yellowstone together. Kansas also has several national parks, including the Tallgrass National Preserve. Located near Strong City, the Tallgrass National Preserve on Highway 177, the preserve is home to native tallgrass and a diverse ecosystem. The park is open all year round with no admission fee.

With all this in mind, how should you celebrate Walk in the Park Day? Many local communities have parks in their cities and towns. Take a friend or your dog to a park you have never visited. Go for a long walk. Many public parks have trails marked for distance, so you can know how far you have walked. Join a walking group. Right now K-State Research and Extension is offering the Walk Kansas Program. This program promotes personal health and well-being by helping participants adopt healthy lifestyle habits. This program is team-based so that you can support and encourage your fellow teammates. The program runs through May 20th. There is still time to sign up. The program offers several virtual walking opportunities and lets you learn more about Kansas. Contact the Meadowlark Extension District to learn more about the Walk Kansas Program, or visit the website at [www. https://www.walkkansas.org/](https://www.walkkansas.org/).

Walking is fun. It helps relax your body, and it improves your health. Walking in the fresh air will clear your mind and help you feel better. Lace-up your shoes and get moving.

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**Cindy Williams**  
District Extension Agent  
Family & Community Wellness

No news this week.