

David Hallauer  
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

### **Soybean Cyst Nematode Sampling**

Soybean Cyst Nematode (SCN) has been called a ‘silent yield killer’. Mostly invisible in terms of aboveground symptomology, SCN typically isn’t present in every soybean field and even where found, year to year yield losses can be variable and difficult to discern.

One way you can ‘monitor to manage’ SCN is with a post-harvest soil test to determine population levels. Collection is similar to fertility sampling: divide the field into sampling zones based on soil type or management (or equal sized quadrants in uniform fields) ideally not over 20 acres in size. Using a probe, collect 10-20 cores in a Z pattern per zone to a depth of six to eight inches. Mix cores together submitting a pint of soil in a labeled/sealed plastic bag.

Samples can be submitted to the K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab for a fee of \$35/sample. Private labs may offer testing as well. Whatever lab you use, be sure to store samples properly, keeping them out of the sun and shipping overnight when possible. More about sampling is in this video from K-State Research & Extension Row Crops Pathologist Dr. Rodrigo Onofre: <https://youtu.be/b6Eo0is110>.

Not sure it’s worth it? Fifty plus samples pulled as part of two separate SCN Sampling grants in the Meadowlark Extension District resulted in mixed news in terms of the potential for soybean yield losses. On the negative side, almost 50 percent of samples had a confirmed presence of SCN at some level. On the positive side, only one of the over fifty samples had reached SCN levels where yield would be potentially limiting.

Why worry about SCN? The sample with yield limiting levels came from a single field sampled in management zones. Levels were yield limiting on one side of the field – and not detected on the other (results were validated with a second set of samples). The take home: SCN levels can vary across farms, making a good sampling protocol important.

Confirmation of SCN isn’t ideal, but it *can* help you better manage (hybrid resistance + crop rotation + seed treatments) farms to reduce the damage SCN could be causing. For more information about testing, general management or about sending samples to the K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab, drop me a line. Want a cool way to look at the potential for yield losses once you get your test results using individual farm information? Check out the SCN Profit Checker at: <https://www.thescncoalition.com/profitchecker/calculator/>. It’s a quick way to estimate potential yield losses from this troublesome pest.

Ross Mosteller  
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

### **Put Hay to Work for Feed, Shelter & Fuel Savings**

As I write this, it is a short week for the Thanksgiving holiday, my hope is that everyone can find reasons to be thankful and spend time with family over the holidays. In coming up with ideas to write, I ran across this old article from Joe Roybal, found it to be interesting, and hope it will be the same for those who are looking for ways to make multiple uses of hay bales. Driving the countryside, there are still forage bales in the field or on field margins, so if you will be moving forage for winter feeding, this might be a consideration yet this year.

Since 1998, the manager of the John E. Rouse Beef Improvement Center near Saratoga, WY, has stacked more than 2,000 tons of large, round bales in giant "V" shapes pointed directly into the prevailing winter winds. The hay serves as winter feed for the Colorado State University facility's 400 commercial Angus cows and yearlings. But the stacking method also helps stabilize the cattle's nutritional requirements by providing them with shelter from chilly winter winds. Plus, the V shape makes snowed-in haystacks a thing of the past.

The giant, V-shaped walls of large round bales in the winter-grazing areas are stacked two deep and two high to a height of about 12 ft. The bottom rows stand vertically and the top rows lay horizontally across the top. The two, 100-ft.-long wings (50 bales each side) come together to form a 90° wedge. The point is oriented directly into the prevailing winter winds.

The hay compacts to form a solid surface impervious to wind. When the wind runs into the V shape of the stack, it spills to the sides, channeling wind and snow along the sides of the wedge rather than over the top. The diversion greatly reduces the wind velocity in the area behind the stacks for as much as 300-400 ft. downwind. It also eliminates accumulation of blowing snow in the protected area.

Moon's old-style stack yards tended to drift in. It wasn't unusual to have to use a crawler tractor to cut a path into a stack yard and dig out the bales at feeding time. The wedge design, however, keeps bales accessible as the wind scours snow from along the front of the structure and deposits it downwind outside the shelter area. "We've found the system works very well. The wedges take less space than our old stackyards and are cheaper to fence because of that," he says. "We haven't had much snow the last 5-6 years but we have had a lot of wind and below-0 weather. That's when the cow's really utilize the shelter behind the wedges."

During the winter-feeding season, Moon feeds from the ends of the wings. To prevent feed loss to wildlife, he surrounds his wedges with game-proof fence, something operators in other locales shouldn't have to do. "If you don't have a wildlife problem, temporary wire panels probably will work to keep cattle out of the hay supply," Moon says. "Corral panels would work the best, but they're expensive."

Moon feeds from the ends, working toward the middle as the winter progresses and the need for shelter dwindles. On the coldest of days (those 0 and below), he feeds behind the shelter. On most days, he spreads hay away from the shelter to draw cattle out from the protected zone to spread out the manure buildup.

The hay wedges are the brainchild of Bob Jairell, a hydrologic technician formerly with the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Laramie, WY. The idea was born out of research he and a team of blowing-snow experts developed over more than three decades. The team's methods and designs are in extensive use throughout the world.

Laura Phillips  
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

### **A Perennial Poinsettia**

Although we normally associate poinsettias with the holiday season, these perennial flowers can be grown throughout the entire year if kept inside. It is native to Mexico where it grows as a shrub and can reach heights of 10 feet or more. While your poinsettia won't reach that size in your home, it can still thrive year after year.

When you bring a poinsettia home from the store, you will want to remove the decorative foil around it. You may need to repot it, especially if the soil feels soggy and has poor drainage - poinsettias are susceptible to stem and root diseases if left in waterlogged soil. When repotting, gently wash the old soil from the roots and choose a potting medium with good drainage. Add water to the poinsettia only once the soil feels dry – generally once a week. Water it thoroughly and allow excess water to drain from the pot.

Poinsettias will do best with bright, indirect light. They should ideally get six hours of light each day. If you place your poinsettia near a window, do not let the leaves touch the glass and be sure there is not a draft from the window. Poinsettias like consistency and will struggle when exposed to hot or cold drafts, so keep it away from space heaters and vents as well. Aim for the temperature to be between 65°F and 75°F.

After the holiday season, continue to allow the poinsettia to grow in bright indirect light, watering as needed and fertilizing occasionally. In February, prune back some of the branches to 5 inches tall if the plant is becoming leggy. This will help create a more compact and denser poinsettia for the next bloom. Then in March, prune off any dead leaves and stems. In May you can prune 2 or 3 inches on the sides to encourage more lateral branching. Around Father's Day you can move the plant outside or even plant it in your garden. Remember to bring it back inside around Labor Day or when temperatures start getting below 60°F.

Once September hits, you can start preparing for the next bloom season. Give the poinsettia 8 hours of light and 16 hours of complete darkness each day with a nighttime temperature of 60°F. Water more sparingly during this time. Around Thanksgiving you can bring the poinsettia out of its strict darkness routine, and place in a bright area. Your new blooms should arrive shortly after.

Alternatively, you can treat the poinsettia like any other house plant, and let nature take its course when it comes to bloom time. The choice is yours!

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Teresa Hatfield  
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

No article this week.

Cindy Williams  
District Extension Agent, Family & Community Wellness

### **Tips for a Strong Financial New Year**

The holidays give you the chance to spend time with loved ones and friends, spend some time catching up on personal projects and make resolutions for the New Year. While it can be overwhelming thinking about what you'll do differently next year, focusing on your financial future is a great place to start. For a strong financial new year try these six tips:

1. **Check your credit report.** Because it affects your ability to get a loan or job, and can help you avoid identity theft, you should check your credit report at least once a year. Reviewing it can also help you understand your credit score, a system used by banks, credit card companies, and other businesses to figure out how likely you are to pay back money you borrow.
2. **Manage your debt to rebuild your credit.** It's never easy to face financial difficulties but ignoring your debt may cause bigger problems. Learn the things to do right away if you cannot pay your credit card bills. Recovering from a financial blow can take time.
3. **Protect yourself from scams.** When a product or opportunity sounds too good to be true, it usually is.
4. **Know your mortgage rights.** How to finance a home can be one of the biggest decisions you'll make? You can prepare for and manage this responsibility by knowing the rules that protect you when shopping for a mortgage and your rights once you have one.
5. **Don't rush big financial decisions.** When choosing between financial products and services, it's easy to feel pressured into making snap decisions. For example, before applying for a new credit card, think about how you plan to use it and shop around to find the best card for you.
6. **Save for a new financial goal.** If your financial situation changes your income goes up or down, or priorities switch you may need to set new objectives for yourself. To reach those new goals think outside of the box, like saving in creative ways. Try setting aside part of your next tax refund to reach that goal.

So, what will be your "new" financial goal or tips that you will use for the new year? You will be glad that you did!