

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Fall Armyworm Scouting Results – 2023

On August 11, 2021, an observant local agronomist found armyworm feeding injury in a brome stand in the Meadowlark Extension District. It would be the first of many calls and discussions lasting well into 2022, with damage done to some stands still discernible to this day.

That fall saw some of the heaviest feeding pressure noted in some time because of multiple factors that came together to make a bad thing a *very* bad thing. Drought that had been slowly spreading from the south and west across the state and reached Northeast Kansas after hay harvest. When armyworms arrived, there wasn't a lot to feed on. Stands locally were drought stressed and struggling to put on foliage. With that tender forage one of the few things to feed on for miles to the west, combined with a heavy moth flight, stands across the area saw multiple rounds of feeding – and no weather for recovery until winter dormancy set in.

Two years later, unless you saw injury symptoms persist, it might be easy to dismiss fall armyworm as a pest to even think about - but you do so at your own peril. Unless you had damage, you might not remember previous infestations in 2018, 2017, 2014, 2013, and 2010. They, too, caused damage, but in most cases not like we saw in 2021. They're here more often than we'd like to think.

While none of this seems very positive, one good thing did come out of the summer of 2021: the start of a monitoring network. Still in its infancy, the summer of 2023 marked the first year the fall armyworm flight was monitored across NEK. Four traps were spread across the south and west parts of the Meadowlark Extension District, each with a pheromone inside to attract male moths. Traps were checked weekly from mid-summer until dormancy.

Though numbers were light, fall armyworm adults *did* pass through our area again this summer. The early flight in was captured in mid-summer in central and southwest Kansas with flights back south for the winter later captured at three of our four trapping sites. The late capture didn't seem to result in any (noticeable) feeding injury, but the trapping network confirmed our suspicion that we would encounter fall armyworm somewhere in Kansas just about every year – and that means regular late summer scouting to avoid the stand issues that came from the 2021 moth flights and subsequent larval hatches.

Want to learn more about the moth trapping network? Check out our season summary video posted on our Facebook page at: <https://fb.watch/pFITIHwygx/>. It will explain our late season moth finds and what to expect from this program in the future. For more information on fall armyworm, feel free to drop me a line.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Winter Goat Management

I'll be the first to admit that goat knowledge is not my strongest suit. Going back through news columns, it appears goats have rarely made the topic list of discussion. Hopefully that can be rectified today, as I've been researching winter care of livestock and came across a good reference. I'd also like to plant the seed that the Northeast Kansas Sheep and Goat school has been scheduled for March 13 in Holton, so be looking for more information on that educational event, focused on small ruminants.

With all animals, winter is a stressful time. Stress can be reduced by providing animals with the proper care, feeding and management practices to help ensure animal comfort and performance during the cold winter months. Goats are generally considered to be hardy animals, but they do need extra attention in the winter months. Common management items to consider with goats in winter follows.

Housing is a primary need, but doesn't need to be fancy or elaborate. The single most important issue regarding housing during winter is to block the harsh, cold north wind. Goats have a thick hair coat, and can survive the winter with minimal housing. A structure with the opening facing the south providing protection from the north wind, while allowing the infiltration of the warm southern winds and sunshine is adequate. Make sure there is plenty of clean, dry bedding available and easy access to food and water. Clean up or add to, soiled or damp bedding frequently to prevent the buildup of manure, moisture and ammonia.

During the cold temperatures, additional energy is needed to maintain body temperature directing more energy to maintenance. To increase energy in the diet, concentrate grains such as corn or oats can be added. Give care to slowly introduce new feed items to goats, as sudden changes in a ration can cause acidosis and/or bloat. Both conditions are potentially fatal to goats if not caught early. Roughages should always be provided in the form of grass, brome or other types of hay. Don't forget to provide a good salt and mineral source and most importantly, an abundant source of water. Frequently change the water to eliminate ice build-up or provide a heated water source or bubbler to keep the water open.

Parasites tend to be an ongoing challenge with small ruminants. Goats should be dewormed multiple times a year to guard against stomach and round worms, when parasite loads build up. Using the FAMACHA scoring system will help determine the need to deworm. There are some dewormers approved for goats and others that work Extra Label, but they need approval by a veterinarian for their use. Lice and mites can become more problematic during the winter months. Mites and lice are irritating to the goat and in some cases, high infestations can cause anemia, poor coat and skin quality. There are a number of drenches, pour-ons, and sprays that will help combat these annoying pests. Work with your veterinarian to determine which medication best suits the needs of your herd. Signs of presence of lice on the goats include; recurrent rubbing up against posts or fence, scratching using the horns or teeth and in some cases, dry flaky skin.

One final thing to consider is feet and hooves. During the cold, wet conditions of winter, it is extremely important to keep the bedding dry and regularly trim the hooves to avoid problems such as foot scald or foot rot. Trimming hooves, prevents mud from sticking to spaces in or on the hoof. Foot scald and foot rot are caused by bacteria that infiltrate the hoof, both causing lameness in animals. Generally, these conditions are treatable and preventable, but chronic animals who continually develop foot scald or foot rot should be eliminated from the herd.

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Houseplant Lighting in the Winter

Winter months not only bring cold temperatures but reduced daylight hours. This can sometimes cause trouble for houseplants that are not getting enough sunlight to properly photosynthesize. Luckily, plants have many ways of communicating their needs to the grower. If a plant receives too much or too little light, the plant will display a stress response to alter you of its needs.

It is important to note that not all plants need the same amount of light. Some house plants do well in low light and do just fine in the winter while others need full sun to thrive. Those of us who have brought in our flowers, succulents and other outdoor plants to overwinter in the living room may have plants that are trying to tell us something.

Too much light? Indoors, too much light is typically a concern for plants kept in a south or southwest facing window. Artificial lights that are kept too close to plants or left on for too long can also cause stress. Similar to how we get sunburns, plants can get injuries on their leaves from excess light. If your plants are beginning to display spots on the leaves that are pale or faded this could be symptoms of excessive light.

Too little light? Plants with insufficient lighting are not able to efficiently produce chlorophyll. Consequently, they may lose their green coloring turning to a paler shade of green or even white. As the plants attempt to grow toward the light source the stems can become elongated or “leggy.” Leaves may drop prematurely and flower buds may not develop. Plants that should be variegated may become solid in color.

If low light is a problem for your indoor growing, consider getting fluorescent or LED light fixtures. Lights that are marketed for plants should come with instructions that tell you how far away the light needs to be from the plant. Reading about the light requirements for your specific plant can also help you determine how long to leave the lights on. You may want to consider getting an outlet timer for your lamps.

Your plants should tell you if the light is not properly adjusted. If the plant leaves burn, move the lamp further away or shorten how long you leave the lamp on. If the stems stretch, move the lamp closer or leave it on longer.

It’s important to note that there are other factors that can cause your plant to look unwell, such as temperature or humidity. But paying attention to how your plant responds to changes in light can help you to provide the best conditions possible for your plant to thrive.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Jackson County Childcare Taskforce Hosts KSU President Linton

In the Spring of 2023, community partners formed the Jackson County Child Care task force. The group's initial focus was to evaluate the child care situation in Jackson County.

In the summer of 2023, the task force distributed a county-wide child care assessment survey in partnership with K-State Research and Extension. The survey had 195 people respond. Respondents included people looking for child care, people who already had a child care provider, child care providers, and the general public. A summary of the survey results indicates that 96% of respondents believe that childcare availability and access negatively impact the community. Lack of care impacts individuals wishing to work in Jackson County but cannot do so because of the lack of options. This, in turn, impacts the ability of employers to find qualified workers, such as in healthcare.

The survey provides valuable insight into community needs; however, with a sample size of 195, only some are represented in the results. The Jackson County Child Care task force is interested in your input.

On Feb. 7, President Richard Linton and a team from Kansas State University will be visiting Jackson County as part of the Regional Community Visits initiative.

K-State would like to invite you to participate in a facilitated conversation with Jackson County's childcare task force, K-State Research and Extension, and local partners as we focus on addressing local childcare needs and efforts. In this session, we will highlight results from the most current needs assessment and strategize for a future responsive to the needs of all children and families within the community.

Together, we will brainstorm ways K-State or other key partners can help leverage resources to serve the county better. Please consider attending this event. Space is limited, so please register using the link below.

Event Details

Title: Responding to Child Care Needs through Collaboration and Partnership
Date: Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024
Time: 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Location: Holton Community Hospital
1110 Columbine Drive
Holton, KS
RSVP: https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3UIFwZG6wpyLMRU

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

Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness---Coping Strategies

What Strategies or “tools” are you using to cope with the stresses you experience? Is there a strategy or “tool” that you once used and was effective at the time, but it is no longer useful? Often, we don’t have the tool that would be the most useful in our current toolbox, so we may need help getting it from someone else or learn how to use a new tool that works better in solving a problem. Think about the coping strategies you are currently using and whether they are effective. Here are some questions to ask yourself about your current coping strategies:

- Does the approach you are using have a helpful effect or a harmful effect?
- Think about matching the strategy you will use to a particular need. Are there tasks that you could delegate to another person to lighten your load?
- Brainstorm and explore the variety of coping strategies available to be used.
- Learning new strategies or adopting different ways of managing stress that you have not used before may be necessary. Being open to new coping practices is helpful.

“Sustainable farming includes sustaining the farmer.” Your first coping priority is to rest and renew your own-being. You can’t care well for your farm or family if you don’t care for yourself. Self-care includes: paying attention to your stress levels, getting enough sleep and exercise, and giving yourself time to renew your energy. Build in personal “time-outs” or rest breaks on a daily and weekly basis. A second coping priority is to focus on open, continuing and healthy communication. Be willing to share your stresses or concerns with others. One of the largest obstacles to healthy communication is being unwilling to share your stresses or concerns with others due to feelings of pride, stubbornness or inadequacy. A third coping strategy is to focus on the relationships that are the most important to you and can help sustain you. Family and other relationships that are positive and healthy provide a large source of support.