

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

ARC/PLC Decisions – 2024/2025 Marketing Year

Without completion of a new Farm Bill, extension of the 2018 Bill means evaluation of the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs at least one more time. March 15th is the election deadline for 2024 harvested crops (payments would be made in late 2025).

The basic program concepts haven't changed. ARC is a revenue-based program, combining five years of both marketing year average prices and county level yields multiplied by a factor to determine a revenue guarantee. Payments are made if the revenue guarantee isn't achieved and capped at 10 percent of the benchmark revenue.

The PLC program is more price-based. When marketing year average prices fall below a reference price, payments are triggered. New for this next year is an increase in selected effective reference prices based on marketing year average price triggers set forth in the original bill.

When evaluating your decision, check out some of the resources available through the KSU Department of Agricultural Economics. The first is a general program overview sharing reference price changes and statewide program election numbers since the inception of the Farm Bill. It's a great read to get the evaluation process started and includes links to additional resources as well. Check it out at <https://www.agmanager.info/arc-and-plc-selections-2024>.

Two of those links will help you take a deeper dive into program options. One is the tradeoff spreadsheet. This Excel based program graphically illustrates where ARC and PLC will tend to pay and when they won't so you can see differences in each commodity at a county level.

The second is a series of two papers providing marketing year average price outlooks. One provides predictions from KSU economists and explains in greater detail the background on the predictions. The other has predictions from multiple other sources for comparison purposes.

All of the above can be found on the KSU Ag Economics Farm Bill webpage at: <https://www.agmanager.info/ag-policy/2018-farm-bill>. Want to hear from KSU Economists about some of what to consider? Check out the *Managing Risk with ARC, PLC and SCO: 2024 Tradeoffs and Tools* webinar Friday, February 2nd with economists Jenny Ifft and Robin Reid. The 12:00 - 1:00 pm Zoom will cover how current market conditions affect these choices plus tools available to help with your decision. Recordings will be available. Register to participate at: <https://www.agmanager.info/events/managing-risk-arc-plc-and-sco-2024-tradeoffs-and-tools>

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Dealing with Hypothermia in Newborns

Anyone who has followed my writing knows that I'm not a fan of winter calving. One way to avoid today's topic is to calve on green grass in spring, but I realize that doesn't work for every operation and frankly isn't every a "sure bet" in Kansas weather. At the recent calving school issues following parturition, such as hypothermia, were discussed. Hopefully, the brutal arctic blast we just experienced is the only one of the season, but please keep in mind that it doesn't take temperatures as extreme as that to create hypothermia. Let's take a look and see if this is a topic to warm up to.

Dr. Tarpoff went into many of the issues effecting the newborn calf that stems from difficulty during birth, also known as dystocia. Contractions from the dam create periods of limited oxygen as the calf moves through the birth canal. When the delivery process is prolonged, calves will be born with critically low levels of blood oxygen. These low levels will be corrected when lung function and breathing begins. However, severe dystocia calves have such low levels that the respiratory system is stifled, potentially leading to a series of negative events.

The increase of blood carbon dioxide levels and the lack of oxygen lead to a condition called acidosis. The acidosis will depress the central nervous system and lead to weak calf syndrome. In these situations, calves are unable to stand and likely have a decreased shivering response, making them more susceptible to hypothermia. Hypothermic calves lack a suckle reflex, causing a failure to ingest necessary colostrum, which will delay the absorption of antibodies and essential nutrients needed for survival. Even if dystocia has not been a problem, when calves are delivered into severely cold, wet and exposed conditions, hypothermia can rapidly set in.

All is not lost and even severely hypothermic calves can be saved with timely intervention. Step one is understanding when to mediate. The normal rectal temperature of a newborn calf is 101.5-102.5 degrees F. Carrying a simple thermometer in your calving kit, will help to identify when a calf is at risk. Once the temperature drops below 101 degrees F, steps should be taken to prevent hypothermia. Another tip is to place two fingers into the mouth of the calf. The inside of the mouth of a healthy calf will be warm and moist and calves should attempt to chew or suck on fingers by instinct. If suckle reflex is absent, it's time to get involved.

There are two basic approaches to warming the newborn, internal and external. Colostrum is the first line of defense for warming a calf internally. Colostrum is made of up to 10% fat and acts as a heat source by converting the fat into energy and maintains body temperature. Calves that can be set sternal and hold their head up need colostrum to begin the warming process. The best source will be from the dam, but other sources such as prepared colostrum replacers may be used as well.

External warming can be accomplished with a variety of sources, but basically boil down to forced warm air or warm water bath. Physical stimulation through rubbing and drying with towels, blankets or similar materials, goes a long way into helping rewarm. There are commercial warming huts designed for calves that work very well and which might need to be considered if calving season typically overlaps with cold, wet conditions. However, if you are cheap like me, the floorboard of your truck works equally well. That is, if you don't mind sharing the cab with a calf who can really come to life and make a mess in doing so. Never leave a calf unattended while using a heat source, as you can potentially "cook" or overheat the calf. Typically, an hour or so is sufficient enough time to rewarm the calf.

While warming units are a handy option, but they can also serve as breeding grounds for some negative impactful pathogens. Carefully clean and disinfect the entire unit between calves. If a bath is utilized, make sure to increase water temperature gradually and ensure the calf is completely dry before returning them to an outdoor environment.

Understanding the risk factors for hypothermia and having a plan prepared to deal with these situations, will aid in preparing a strategy to prevent loss. Managing dystocia and knowing when/how to assist chilled calves should be an essential part of your calving planning and preparation.

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Will our winter storms damage your fruit tree?

Those with fruit trees may be wondering if our recent cold snaps and snow storms have harmed their fruit trees. Fortunately, our fruit trees are still in their dormancy period and our weather has likely not caused any damage.

When trees go into dormancy, they become cold hardy. They undergo various physiological changes that prevent low temperatures from causing damage. The trees slow down their growth, and develop winter buds on their twigs, which are a hard-shell coating that protects living tissue underneath from the cold. The tree also allows water to exit its tissue cells, so that cells do not freeze and rupture. This is what causes the sap in trees to become thick and sugary during the winter – which is why we harvest maple syrup in the winter!

This does not mean that fruit trees are immune to cold weather all the time. These protections from the cold are only present when the tree is dormant. When spring comes, and the trees get more sunlight and warmer weather, they start to undo these changes that prevent cold damage. If there is a late frost or cold snap, they may not be prepared for the cold and suffer branch die back. Fruit trees that are not properly pruned are also at a higher chance of suffering frost damage.

While our recent weather may have caused us to retreat into our warm homes, the odds are that your fruit trees were able to endure the cold without any damage. If you have concerns about your trees cold-hardiness, or how to care for your trees, feel free to reach out to our office for more guidance.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Medicare Advantage Plan Open Enrollment is January 1-March 31, 2024

You may not have heard of this Medicare enrollment period. January 1 through March 31 is the Medicare Advantage Plan Open Enrollment Period. Current Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan can make certain changes during this time. You can:

- Change to a different Medicare Advantage Plan.
- Drop your Medicare Advantage Plan and go back to Original Medicare.
- Join a Part D Prescription Drug Plan.

Remember that if you decide to return to Original Medicare, you may not be guaranteed the right to purchase a Medigap plan through a private insurance company. Guaranteed rights to purchase Medigaps only happen during certain circumstances. People in the Medigap Open Enrollment Period (generally six months after you have enrolled in Medicare Part B) have the right to purchase a Medigap plan regardless of their health status. After the Medigap Open Enrollment period ends, you might still be able to buy a Medigap plan. However, you may have to answer questions about your health. The plan can decide whether or not to insure you, and you may have to pay a higher premium. Medicare beneficiaries can find good information on Medigap plans on the Kansas Insurance Department website at <https://insurance.kansas.gov/>.

If you are considering switching to a different Medicare Advantage plan, you will need to consider the following.

- Are your current healthcare providers in the network for that particular plan? If your providers are not in the network, the plan may not cover your healthcare; even if they cover some non-network providers, you may pay a higher out-of-pocket cost.
- You may have to choose a different doctor if your doctor is not in the network.
- How are your medications covered with the new plan? You will want to see if the new plan still has your medicines on the formulary, and if so, will they cost more or less?
- Certain areas of the state may have more choices for Medicare Advantage Plans. A friend in an urban area will have more options than someone in a rural.
- Plans can modify and make changes to the network annually. You will need to be on top of these changes every year. If your doctor or healthcare facility falls out of the network, you will have some difficult decisions.
- The maximum out-of-pocket limits vary from plan to plan. The maximum out-of-pocket is the amount you pay for cost-sharing before the plan covers you at 100%.

If you are currently on Original Medicare with a Part D Prescription Plan, you cannot use this enrollment period to enroll in a Medicare Advantage Plan. You cannot switch from one Prescription drug plan to another. You also cannot join a drug plan if you do not have one with Original Medicare.

For unbiased answers to questions about the Medicare Advantage Plan Open Enrollment or for any of your Medicare questions, contact Teresa Hatfield, Family and Community Wellness Agent, K-State Research and Extension-Meadowlark District at thatfield@ksu.edu or 785-336-4125.

January 26, 2024

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

No news article this week