Ag Radio programs for December 16 - 22, 2013

Windbreaks

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The recent bout of winter weather reminds us all what a big difference being able to get out of the wind can make. I see a lot of new homes going up out in the county in very exposed sites. I also see a lot of cowherd wintering areas that are really exposed too. Windbreaks can make a big difference on heating bills for homes and energy requirements for cattle. The general rule of thumb on cattle is that for every degree below 32 of wind chill it adds 1% to the animals energy needs to stay warm. So simply having a good windbreak of trees can decrease feed needed by 20 to 30% in the coldest parts of winter. Windbreaks aren't rocket science. You plant a mix of 3 or 4 rows of trees and shrubs on the north and west side of the house or cattle feeding area to protect. My preference is to have 2 rows of eastern red cedar, one row of a good deciduous tree like red oak and then finish off with a medium to large shrub on the very inside row. Lilac works great for this but there are other options as well. I really don't recommend pines or any evergreen other than cedar as they can have so many issues. Cedar is native and it grows well. The good news is that I can help you layout the windbreak and you can order seedling trees, that are easy to plant, from the Kansas Forest Service at a very reasonable amount. The big challenge is not in getting the trees planted, but in keeping the weeds away and if it's dry, keeping them watered the first three years. But that's another story! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Adjusting feed for cold weather

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Yesterday I mentioned briefly the need for adjusting feed for cattle in cold weather. The general feeling is that for every degree of wind chill below 32 the cattle need 1% more energy. Well, that is just an average. It doesn't take into account a wet vs a dry haircoat. It doesn't take into account the stage of pregnancy or first calf heifers that we're trying to develop more frame on vs mature cows that don't need anymore size. It doesn't take into account cattle that are in good to a little fleshy condition as opposed to cows that are a little on the thin side that could use a little more conditioning. Most spring calving cows, I guess I'll call February calving spring calving, cows are either in that last 50 days precalving, or in that period before that which we'll call mid-gestation. Mid-gestation cows, those that won't be calving until mid March, are possibly at their lowest nutritional needs right now. They only need about 1.4 pounds of protein a day. Once we get into that last 50 days pre-calving that protein needs jumps up to 1.6 pounds. With average to good alfalfa cows in mid-gestation can get by with 7 to 10 lbs of alfalfa plus free choice prairie hay or crop stover. Cows in that 50 day precalving period probably need to be in that 9 to 12 pounds of alfalfa. In really cold weather you can add a couple pounds of grain to the mix to give them more energy. The bottom line is that if you have a wide range of cows in varying conditions, you'd be better off to sort the critters into different groups so that you don't waste feed on those who don't need more and get extra to those who need it! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

Otte.

Selecting New Varieties and Hybrids

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In another month we'll be past the first of the year and farm shows will be getting under way. And while you are there you WILL be barraged with information for this that and the other new hybrid, new variety, new this or new that. Don't get sucked into making any fast and furious decisions. A majority of the agri-companies that are out there are good solid firms that do good research and when they bring a new product to the market, whether it's a new crop variety, a new pesticide, whatever, it is backed with solid science, often times corroborated by independent University research as well. For new varieties and hybrids, you can always check out the K-State crop performance variety test plot results. These are replicated yield trials that are performed at many locations, both irrigated and dryland, all across the state. You can put a lot of faith in these tests and look at how they have done in various environments. Granted, they don't test every single line that seed companies have and some seed companies don't even participate, but it's a good place to start looking. And as always, if you hear an advertising pitch that sounds just too good to be true, be skeptical, because it probably is too good to be true! And quickly, while on the topic of new varieties, K-State is releasing a new soybean variety, KS4313N. This is a NON roundup ready variety with excellent yield potential, good lodging scores, average plant height, good quality AND at least some soybean cyst nematode resistance. If you're looking for a conventional soybean variety, here's a new one to consider! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.