

Getting Ready for Wheat Harvest

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Wheat harvest is running a little bit later than we have expected in recent years. But it will be happening before long so we need to be getting to that list of pre-harvest chores. The wheat growers in Geary County produce a quality product so let's strive to keep it that way. Starting from the combine to the grain carts, augers, trucks and on farm storage if you do store any, now is the time to be cleaning things up. Get all old grain out and whatever other crud you find. If you are storing grain on farm, get that bin cleaned up, and I mean get the shop vac out there to clean dust, chaff and grain out of cracks and crevices, then treat with an approved insecticide. Even if you are just holding some wheat until October for planting, you can lose a lot in a hurry to insects and storage molds. Take time to go over all equipment used in harvest, with a fine tooth comb. Try to remember the last time you used it and whether there were any little issues that caused you to say, "I need to get that fixed before wheat harvest next year." because more than likely you didn't get it fixed. As harvest gets closer, take some time to mow down weeds and grass around field entrances or in the farm yard where you may be filling bins. Then inventory all of your harvest equipment maintenance products to make sure you're ready to keep harvest going once it starts. Harvest will be here soon and you need to be ready to roll as soon as the crop is ready. Weather can turn fast, and you don't want to lose anything or any time. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

These weeds are taking over my pasture!

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've had a lot of conversations with pasture managers and for that matter homeowners, this year about a weed, or sometimes it's more than one, that they are concerned is taking over their pasture or their yard. And as I tell people time and time again, a natural ecosystem will react to the management that it's given and the weather conditions that it is exposed to. Following essentially two years of drought, pasture grasses are in a defensive mode trying to regain some condition and root reserves. Normal stocking rates in 2012 resulted in pretty much little standing cover UNLESS cattle were pulled early last year, and even then it was often too late, the cover was already gone. This resulted in a lot of bare soil last fall and this spring. Many annual plants, both forbs and grasses, will establish quickly under those conditions. Winter annuals, like the various cheat grasses get going in the fall and then the summer annual got cranked up here in the past few weeks. Perennial forbs, like western ragweed, and ironweed are deep rooted and less affected by drought so they can establish more shoots and enlarge their root systems. If we have more normal rainfall and if these pastures are not over grazed in the next couple of years, this apparent surge of weeds will go away about as quickly as it showed up. Sure, spray noxious weeds and take advantage of a non-burning spring to treat wood brush and trees right now. But don't waste your time spraying all those "weeds" out there. It's part of a natural cycle that ebbs and flows. Cattle will actually graze on some and don't worry about the others! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

Chuck Otte.

Are cover crops for you?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There is growing interest in using cover crops. There are many reasons to consider cover crops including erosion control, weed suppression, nitrogen fixation, nutrient trapping and building soil organic matter. Naturally there's always some possible adverse effects that shouldn't be ignored. Some cover crops can create a great deal of residue which might be a problem in no-till situations. Water use is always a concern but we've discovered it actually may not be as much of a concern as we once thought, BUT it's something to consider when it's dry. There's also additional expense for the seed, there's the risk of herbicide carryover and if you are thinking about a cover crop on wheat acres, there's got to be a way to control volunteer wheat. It'll be interesting to see how quickly we start harvesting wheat this year and how that impacts double crop soybeans. Soybeans are probably the best cover crop we have for our area, but not for the reasons that many folks may think. Sorghum as a forage crop is another consideration especially if you are concerned about forage again this fall and winter. But you may also want to consider planting something in soybean, corn or sorghum acres this fall to help trap nutrients and nitrogen. Oats are great for planting in the fall post harvest to hold soil and suck up nitrogen especially. The oats will often winterkill, at least in part and those that don't are easily killed with glyphosate in the spring. But like everything else, you need to have a plan. Don't do it because someone else is doing it, Plant a cover crop for a specific purpose! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.