Ag Radio programs for June 30 - July 6, 2014

Should we Cut Alfalfa or Wait until After the Rain?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK,  I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The eternal conundrum for hay producers is whether to cut the hay, when rainy weather is predicted, of wait until the rain is past. If it is time to cut the hay, regardless of whether it is alfalfa, brome or prairie hay, any delays will cause the plant to go past optimum condition and start to lose quality, usually in the form of lower protein and decreased digestibility. On the other hand, if you cut the hay, and it gets rained on, you will lose quality, i.e. lower protein and decreased digestibility. You would think that anything is perplexing as this would generate a lot of research. But what I have found is that there is not a lot of research on this. There are lots of opinions and lots of speculation, but very little research. I found one study out of Kentucky or Pennsylvania or someplace like that from about 20 years ago that suggested 3 days as the magical number. If the rain delay was going to be 3 days or less, then wait for the rain to pass. But after threes days, the alfalfa was starting to lose more quality by becoming over mature than it would from weathering damage. And in light of no newer or better information, that's what I've been staying with for several years. I recently helped a producer analyze samples of two lots of hay. A field was swathed all at once, half of the field got put up before the rain, the other half after. The color difference was very obvious, but the forage test came back with far less difference than I expected, which would support the cut first scenario.

This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Moss in Ponds

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK,  I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Probably about the only thing more annoying than cattails to owners of farm ponds is moss. Now, technically moss is not the correct term. What most of us call moss is actually algae, usually filamentous algae. Then on top of that, there are three different types of filamentous algae. If you really want to know what kind of filamentous algae you have we have a pretty good publication that goes into a lot more detail. But what most pondowners want to know is how to get rid of the stupid stuff. Some people have stocked ponds with grass carp to control moss. While grass carp will work on many plant problems in ponds, they aren't very effective at controlling filamentous algae. The bad news is that there's really only one way to control moss in ponds and that is with copper based algaecides. The good news is that copper based algaecides are fairly inexpensive. Most people use copper sulfate crystals or granules and spread them over the surface of a pond. The good news is that if done correctly you won't harm fish in a pond and cattle can continue to drink the water. If you have a lot of moss you want to control it slowly. You could apply enough copper to kill it all at once, but as the algae dies and decomposes it uses up all of the oxygen in the water and fish will die from lack of water oxygen. You will need somewhere between 2/3 of a pound and 5 pounds of copper sulfate per acre-foot of water. This wide variance is due to the need for higher rates in more alklaine water. In general, I encourage folks to start with a couple ponds per acre foot and then reapply as needed for control. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Controlling Cattails

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK,  I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Once we get past controlling moss on farm ponds, the next biggest challenge is controlling cattails not only on farm ponds but around septic lagoons as well. Far and away, the best control of cattails is going to be from glyphosate, but you need to be careful. The traditional Roundup products are not to be used where spray may reach the water. In other words, most glyphosate labels do not allow you to use them in aquatic settings. One thing I have never gotten a clear answer on is whether sewage lagoons come under the same criteria. Anyway, there is a glyphosate product available specifically for aquatic usage and it is called Rodeo. For homeowners there is a Hi-Yield product available that any store that carries Fertilome or HiYield products should be able to get. It is called Hi-Yield Killzall Aquatic Herbicide. It is the same glyphosate concentration as the Rodeo herbicide. Cattails are hard to kill. I've tackled it before and they are tough. The Rodeo label recommends a 4 to 7% solution compared to the normal 1 to 2% that we use for most other glyphosate uses. Before treatment, make sure that the cattails are growing well and have leaves at least two feet long. Then thoroughly cover as much of the foliage as possible. Remember, those leaves are straight up and down and it's hard to keep the spray on them. After treatment, wait 4 weeks and then retreat as needed. In a farm pond setting remember that a few cattails are beneficial to fish and wildlife so maybe just controlling cattails in a few areas to allow access for fishing. In a lagoon setting, kill them all! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.