

Phosphorus and Potassium availability

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I had a good discussion the other day with a producer. As happens he had been listening to a lot of different sources talking about soil testing and how the levels of phosphorus or potassium may look high, but a lot of those nutrients weren't really available to the plant. They were tied up in the soil and we need to be adding more to compensate. Yup, I've heard all of that before and this is a classic case of not being told the whole story. The soil tests that we do often do measure more phosphorus and potassium than may be available to the plant. These nutrients are regularly going into and out of soil solution and availability. Both nutrients are most readily available when soil pH is between 6 and 7. Phosphorus can drop off somewhat in higher pH soils, but there's not much we can do about that, but if we start to get fields lower than pH 6.0 we need to be thinking about liming them. When we make our recommendations from those soil tests, we know that not all of the phosphorus or potassium that was measured is available and we take that into account. The soil test recommendations have been calibrated to take that into account. We know that if you have phosphorus soil test levels over 30 ppm it is highly unlikely that you will see a yield increase from applying more. We also know that if the levels are under 20 ppm it is highly likely that you will see a yield increase. So when somebody says that all those nutrients aren't available, just say, yup, that's right! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Is Burning Pastures Advisable This Year

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Back in November and December pasture managers were feeling pretty good. We had good grass growth in 2013, we'd started to see a little water go back into ponds and there was a lot of talk of burning this spring. But since then we've been falling back into that old routine of below normal rainfall. In the past five months, only February had above normal precipitation and that isn't saying too much. In fact for the past five months we are at 45% of normal precipitation. Sure, we had a lot of snow, over 30 inches of snow, but it was a lot of cold dry snow and no other rains that came with it. As much as I like fire, I'm really hesitant to encourage very much this spring. The amount of soil moisture that we have will get the grass up and going, but I don't know how much growth we can expect. I've seen some pretty dry Mays in the past, and with no more moisture than we've seen the past seven months, we may be headed to another one. The other challenge is going to be controlling those fires. Yes, we have a fair amount of fuel out there and we've seen some hot fires already. We basically have another month to six weeks when we can expect to be able to burn pastures so we don't have to decide today. If we start to see some good rainfall then light up those pasture that need burned the most. But even if we do start to see some good rains I would limit my burning to no more than 1/3 of your total grassland acres. I would also plan on stocking my pastures somewhat conservatively and then be prepared to do my first pasture condition evaluation the last half of June and be ready to make changes. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

I'm Chuck Otte.

How's Your Wheat Looking?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In my younger days I probably enjoyed living on the edge. Now days definitely not as much, but we've got a lot of wheat fields this spring that may be living on the edge. We've got a couple of things at work right now, one much more concerning than the other. There have been scattered reports of army cutworm around the area. While present to some extent every spring, most of the time they have been below the treatment threshold. If your wheat started to green up and then seemed to just start to disappear, I'd get out there on sunny warm mornings and start looking around. These rascals will get into almost any crop in the spring and are quite fond of wheat and alfalfa. But far and away the bigger concern is winter kill or what we'll loosely group together as winter kill. While most of our wheat had good snow cover in the coldest weather there are going to be areas that blew clean that may be a bit thin or totally dead. If you find dead plants start digging down and first of all checking to make sure that the seed was about an inch and a half below the soil surface. Shallow planting causes winter kill. What we've been seeing, especially a little further west from here are fields that were planted into clean till are showing more damage. We had good moisture to get the seeds germinated but not enough to really get good crown roots started. We are also seeing some apparent variety differences and that's all the further I'm going to go with that. Ultimately, if you are seeing dead spots in the wheat, give me a call so I can come out and take a look at it to help you figure out what's happening. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

Chuck Otte.