

Time to get planting, but don't push it

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. October 5th is the Hessian Fly Free date. This is the date at which we feel that it is okay to start planting wheat without a severe threat of having a Hessian fly disaster. Of course, there are always exceptions, but it seems to work pretty good. I also feel that October 5 through the 20th is usually THE best time, agronomically speaking, to plant wheat. But let's remember a few things to make the best of our efforts. We've had some rain lately which means that when you do get the wheat in the ground it's going to come up fast. But let's make sure that anytime we have fall rains we let things dry out properly. Planting into soil too wet is going to cause more problems than waiting a couple more days to let it dry down! If you are planting through crop residue, make sure that you are getting down through that residue. Amazingly I see more problems in soybean stubble than anywhere else. For a wheat plant to develop a proper crown for adequate root development, the seed has to be a minimum of 3/4 inch below the soil surface and preferably 1 to 1 1/4 inches. If you have a lot of soybean residue between the rows, your drill, even a good no till drill, may have problems punching through that. Many stand problems that I see every year are in notill fields where seed simply did not make it through the residue and into the soil. It sprouts just fine, often makes it through the winter and then when it's time to really take off and grow, it's just sitting there doing nothing. Check seed depth! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Nitrates in sorghum

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that we start thinking about sorghum and nitrates and prussic acid. Nitrates and prussic acid can both kill cattle, one much faster than the other, but they can both be just as fatal. Prussic acid, for the most part dissipates after harvest, give a week or two, or after a hard killing freeze, given that same week or so of time. But if a sorghum plant is high nitrates is harvested, it's going to stay high in nitrates. Ensiling will remove about 1/3 of the nitrates but simply baling it up doesn't change a thing. We've been running quite a few forage samples through the labs already this late summer and fall and here's what I can tell you. It's all over the board! Prussic acid hasn't been too bad but that's because everything has been pretty good sized plants that were sent in. Prussic acid is going to be highest in new young shoots that are less than a foot tall. These are the ones that pop up in milo stubble fields after harvest or a light frost that can kill cattle in a hurry. If you've got cattle on sorghum stalks now and we get a pretty good freeze, you need to pull the cattle out for a few weeks. Nitrates, on the other hand have ranged from 500 to 7500. Basically anything under about 4000 ppm nitrates is going to be pretty safe, but once you get over about 6,000 you need to really start to proceed cautiously. Now, if you want a quick test, I do have the nitrate sampling solution that we can check FRESH stalks for a general idea of possible issues. But for a good solid test, we really need to send a sample in to the lab just to make sure we aren't going to have problems. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Winter Weather Outlook

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. So everybody is all a twitter about what the winter weather is going to be like. The farmer's almanac (which I honestly don't put much faith in) is calling for a hard winter. Many people are talking about the folk lore signs leaning the same way. So what's it going to be? Check back with me in April and I'll tell you! Just as I don't put much faith in the farmer's almanac I don't put much faith in the folklore about woolly bears, squirrels and nuts or even persimmon seeds or whatever it was someone was trying to tell me about! Anything in the natural world is going to be dictated by what has been, not by what's going to be. I'm sorry, but plants and insects don't know what the weather 4 months from now is going to be like. The national climate prediction center is currently showing us in the normal range, or more precisely the equal chances. The current El Nino current in the Pacific appears to be pushing moisture into the US and for just south and west of us the climate center is calling for above normal precipitation through the winter months. But right now, we are in the equal chances category meaning there's equal chances for normal, above normal and below normal. The above average moisture could get here, but don't count on it. And also remember that we can have winter rains, so it doesn't necessarily mean more snow than normal. And for the next 15 months, the climate center has us on equal chances for temperature. Bottom line, there are no definitive trends setting up for our part of Kansas. So like I said at the beginning, check with me in April and I'll tell you! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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