Ag Radio programs for December 28, 2015 - January 3, 2016

Winter Crop Program Schedule

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It's the week between Christmas and New Years. In an Extension office it's the equivalent of dead week for college students, that week before finals when students are supposed to be studying for finals, but usually wind up doing NOTHING. The university is shut down, half the population is gone for the holidays and nobody really wants to do much of anything productive, especially think. So I'll try to keep the programs light this week. This morning I want to mention several producer educational programs coming up in the first 6 weeks or so of the new year. Locally, I'll be hosting a managing herbicide resistant weed populations program on January 21st at the Fairgrounds. Nominal charge for that one to help cover the cost of the meal. Then there's the winter ranch management seminar in Alta Vista that I mentioned last week. Moving a little further out but still within reason we have several crop schools that are being hosted at a handful of locations around Kansas again this winter. The corn school will be first and it will be January 15th in Salina at Great Plains Manufacturing. The closest soybean school appears to be in Marysville on January 29th at the American Legion. And for those of you who feel, like I do, that grain sorghum is still a valid crop, we appear to have two choice - February 4th in Ellsworth or February 5th in Emporia. Right now I'm planning on attending all three of these and will have room for riders. Registration is required, contact me for details! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Survivability of small wheat through the winter

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We had a lot of wheat that either emerged late because of dry soils at normal planting time or late planting following soybean harvest. As I've been out in the country over the past two weeks I've seen wheat everywhere from being so lush it really needs to be grazed to just now being able to finally row it easily. We've been fortunate that we've had some warm late soil conditions and even though the wheat is growing slowly, it is still growing. We've only had one night below 20 and it's going to take more than that to truly get that wheat dormant. Once soil temperatures are below 50 and stay there, wheat plants start to develop their winter hardiness. Basically the plant develops a type of antifreeze to keep cells in the crown from freezing solid thus allowing the plant to survive the winter. It takes 4 to 6 weeks for this to occur at that 50 degree soil tempeature and the colder the soil temperature is at crown level, the faster it reaches maximum hardiness. The worst case scenario would be for us to go from current weather to a week of night time temperatures in single digits. We would like wheat to have 3 to 5 tiller prior to the onset of winter. One or two tillers with 4 - 5 leaves is the minimum that we'd like to see to expect good survival. We have a lot of wheat that is just at that point and far too much that may be at one tiller and only 3 to 4 leaves. We have fields that may be touch and go this winter. Moist soil conditions help. A mild winter would help and that may happen. But all it takes is one really cold snap to cause a lot of damage. Stay tuned and keep your fingers crossed! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Compaction

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One of the biggest problems I see in fields is compaction. Compaction is sorely misunderstood and often overlooked as a yield robbing problem. Soil compaction is the end result of running heavy equipment over moderately damp soil or even the running of moderate weight equipment over the same area repeatedly. Healthy soil is basically 50% solid mass, consider that as sand, silt, clay, and organic matter, and 50% void space between those soil particles. In perfect conditions these voids are equally filled with air and water. It is these voids where water moves, roots grow down and nutrients infiltrate into the soil. When you have a compaction event, the soil particles are crushed together and the space between the particles is eliminated or nearly eliminated. Contrary to what many producers think, compaction is less likely to occur when soils are so wet that you are making ruts, and more likely to occur when it is moderately damp up to field capacity. Soil compaction restricts root growth, it restricts water movement through the soil, it restricts nutrient uptake, it simply costs you yield. Compaction does not just go away quickly and easily on its own. Wetting and drying, freezing and thawing helps, a little, but often it takes deep ripping tillage tools to start to get that broken up. Some cover crops can help start to break up compaction layers. Ultimately the best way to deal with compaction is to not let it happen, which becomes a challenge with today's super sized equipment. This spring could be a real compaction problem scenario so let's look for ways to avoid compaction! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.