

Caution with Fire

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. What an interesting couple of weeks! We went through a period of very warm and very dry weather. We got some burning done in those days. Then we added very windy to the mix and all heck broke loose! If we cut to the chase, here's the scenario we are looking at. We have quite a bit of fuel out there. Cool season grasses like brome grass and fescue are just starting to green up so it's even still fairly dry. We have relatively dry soil conditions. With warm weather and very low relative humidity like we were seeing, humidity down into the teens, we have a fuel source that is explosively dry. It'll catch fire very easily and burn very rapidly. Then when we added wind to the equation, we went into a red flag warning, or no burn period. Unfortunately, some people didn't care that it was a no burn period and they burned anyway and quickly lost the fire. Or fires from several days prior were still smoldering and embers were caught by the winds. Fortunately damper weather and higher humidity returned and that has helped. The Emergency Management and Extension Offices are trying something new this year. During the burn season we have a simple web page established at gearyfire.org. It's updated every day and tells you quickly whether burning will be allowed that day or not. You still have to have your burn permit, you still have to call in for permission. The web page just let's you know whether burning will be allowed. Please use caution and let's avoid those firetruck runs! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Alfalfa weevil activity

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When we have 10 days of temperatures 20 to 30 degrees above normal we are going to get fall laid alfalfa weevil eggs hatching! And sure enough I found my first alfalfa weevil larvae on March 13th. Alfalfa shoots were less than 2 inches tall and I was finding as many as four tiny first instar larvae in the tips. If you want to see photos go to the Geary County Extension Facebook page. The cooler weather, basically any day that its under 50 degrees, pushes the little rascals down to the base of the plant where they hide under debris. It is too early to spray. They aren't doing enough damage to justify treatment and we have a whole lot more eggs to hatch yet. Unless you really like to spend money on spraying alfalfa, you just need to hold on. On the nicer warmer days - meaning sunshine and temperatures above 55 degrees, get out there and scout your alfalfa fields. When you are starting to get 1 to 2 larvae in every stem, then it's time to spray. Let's also review the guidelines to make sure that your insecticide treatment will work. First of all, don't spray unless it is sunny and temperatures above 55 degrees. You have to have those weevil larvae up on the plant where the spray can get to them. All of the labeled insecticides are still working but it is imperative that you use adequate carrier and full rates of active ingredient. While many products recommend 10 gallons per acre, I'd encourage you to consider 15 gallons to really get good thorough coverage and canopy penetration. We rarely see true insecticide failure, it's usually, shall we say improper application issues! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Early Season wheat

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While the wheat came through the winter in pretty good shape, much of it needs some very regular rains in the weeks ahead. I've been looking at a lot of wheat recently so let's do a round robin report of what I'm seeing. There's been a little bit of winter kill in scattered locations but this has been fairly light, at least in the fields I've been in so far. I did find one field in western Geary county that had Hessian Fly in it. I'm sure there are more, but I've only seen it in one field. If you are scouting for Hessian Fly, look for plants that just have one or two tillers that appear dead or dying and start peeling back leaf sheaths at the base of the plant looking for the telltale flax seed. Some of the later planted wheat is very small and dry soils have been limiting tiller and root development. Some of the fields still just have primary roots without the secondary roots developing because the crown is in dry soil. Early last week some of these fields were even showing that blue-green look of drought stress. Some of the earliest planted wheat was just starting to joint last week so if you are grazing wheat, you need to be getting those cattle off of it pretty soon. If you haven't yet gotten your wheat top dressed you need to get that done ASAP and next year make a note to fertilize in late November! Disease pressure is very light locally and in the state. Some indication of higher than average levels of rust overwintering in Texas are a caution note. At this time the pathologists are not recommending any half rate fungicide applications. Save your money and wait until flag leaf stage. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.