

Prescribed Burning Roundtable

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Where there's smoke, there's fire. We've heard that phrase for years. Well let me flip it on you and say that where there's fire, there's bound to be smoke. Fire, prescribed burning grass fires to be specific, are not an issue. Smoke, however, is an issue and it's going to become more and more so in coming years. We have to be able to continue to use fire as a range management tool. So with that comes a great responsibility to use this tool in a manner that does not cause excessive issues in large urban areas to the south, east and north. I've heard many folks complain about the smoke from grass fires during April. And I've also heard a lot of producers complain about the regulations that allow them or prevent them from burning pastures. I'm here to tell you that it is a juggling act the likes you may not have heard of and it involves far more than you, me and Geary County Emergency Management. To that end, we are having a roundtable discussion Tuesday night, March 21st at the 4-H/Sr. Citizens Building at the fairgrounds starting at 7 p.m. Even at this time we are still working on who all will be there but the key players that we know of so far are Geary County Emergency Management, Kansas Livestock Association and Kansas Department of Health and Environment. I will serve as the moderator and YOU will be able to hear all the players discuss the issues and then ask them questions. This may be a once every few years opportunity so come on out, and let's clear the air about smoke! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

2017 Cash Rental Rates

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Everybody wants to know what going cash rental rates are for both crop ground and pasture land. Everybody wants to know, but nobody wants to tell. By the way, have you filled out your pasture rental rates survey yet? So there are two ways to determine what cash rental rates should be. Everyone can turn in their information and we can calculate an actual average based on real information, OR we can generate our best estimates based on average crop production costs from Kansas Farm Management Association using average yields and forward estimates on commodity prices. We plug this information into a computer spreadsheet along with information on commonly shared expenses in crop share leases and then calculate average rates based on an average mix of crops in the different parts of the state. From this we calculate what the landlord could have expected to receive given the crop shares arrangement. This is then known as the equitable shares rent. See, wouldn't it have been easier if you'd just responded to those surveys and told us what you really are receiving? The past several years have been interesting with estimated dryland cash rental rates dropping from \$105 per acre in 2014, in Geary County, to \$49.30 per acre for 2017. That is quite a slide and is all because of falling crop prices. For comparison the 2016 Kansas Ag Stats survey showed average county rental rates of \$66 per acre. So, where should your cash rate be? Probably somewhere between those. FYI, Dickinson was \$25, Clay \$38 and Riley \$75. Confused by this range? Yeah, so am I! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Planter Downforce Technology

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last week I talked about stand establishment issues in wheat because of shallow seed placement when planting. Soybeans can have issues, but generally don't because as a broadleaf plant it develops its roots differently. If it's deep enough in the ground to germinate and can get its root headed down, it's good to go. Sorghum is like wheat in that it does need to get placed at the proper depth. The issue of shallow seed placement never used to be a problem. Deep seed placement was in issue, especially when we started growing semi-dwarf wheats in the 1970s. Because these had shorter coleoptile lengths, they could not be planted as deeply as the older wheats were. Get them in too deep and they just wouldn't grow. But in those days fields were well tilled prior to planting. A good old standard drill had no issues getting seed into the ground. But as we have slowly moved towards reduced and no till crop production we have started running into more and more problems. We find firmer soils in fields so we are planting into wetter soils. Rolling equipment on wetter soils can lead to increased compaction making the soil harder. Mechanical downforce systems may often be poorly equipped to do a good job of seed placement. Just last week I received a new bulletin from K-State that is titled Planter Downforce Technology for Uniform Seeding Depth. If you are into planters and planter technology you need to stop by and get a copy of this bulletin. It is also available on-line. It goes into some elaborate systems and discussions but I think you will find it interesting! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Smoke Management planning tools

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you are a grazing lands manager you really need to have this web page address bookmarked on your home computer and your phone: ksfire.org. That's all you need to enter into your internet browser to get to the Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management page. This page is a wealth of information and can be quite invaluable for anyone wanting to do range burning. There are links to regulations as well as frequently asked questions and best management practices. Here's the challenge. Pasture fires produce smoke. This time of year with the fuel loads that we have, which are quite high as a matter of fact, any fire is going to produce a lot of smoke and there in is the problem that we are trying to manage. Smoke can move long distances, I mean hundreds of miles. The huge fires in southwest Kanas on March 6th that caused so much damage produced smoke that impacted us in the northern Flint Hills. But it didn't stop here. It proceeded northeasterly where it hit the leading edge of that strong cold front which then pushed it back to the southeast clear into Missouri and Arkansas. Smoke contains many components that impact air quality, specifically particulate matter and ozone measurements. We may think that we are out here on our own, but everything is interconnected and what we do in our little corner of the Flint Hills can have big impacts somewhere else. The Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan goes into effect in the month of April. Stay tuned tomorrow and I will discuss some of the considerations in the smoke management plan and why you need to pay attention! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan is a concerted and organized effort to work collaboratively during the month of April, when much of the tall grass prairie is burned, to try to minimize air quality issues in Kansas City, Wichita, Lincoln or even Omaha. If ozone and particulate matter levels go over set levels in these locations because of ag burning in the Flint Hills it creates bad press and continues to erode the base of support for prescribed burning of grasslands - a tool that we all know we need to maintain. To try to help reduce the smoke load in April there are additional restrictions placed on the counties in the Flint Hills regions. You need to be aware that Geary County is on the western edge of the 14 county region. Dickinson and Clay county are not in the smoke management plan region. We have restrictions on what we can and can't burn but right across the road, in some cases, there won't be the same restrictions. During the month of April agricultural burning is about all that is allowed in Geary County. No brush piles can be burned in the county during April. Get them burned by March 31st or wait until May 1st. If you burn household trash in a burn barrel normally, you can continue to do that. If you want to light your grill to cook your steaks on Saturday night, you can do that as well. Basically we are trying to reduce any burning other than pasture burning to just reduce the smoke load in the air. And of course in Geary County, you need to have a burn permit and call in to get permission to burn prior to starting the burn. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.