Ag Radio programs for March 27 - April 2, 2017

Beware of articles in nationwide ag magazines

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was recently reading one of the national farm magazines and saw a story titled, "What they learned from 90,000 plant samples". Wow, that sounds fascinating, so I flipped to the article that discussed what 90,000 plant tissue sample analyses showed. There were six trends that they reported that I guess were supposed to be somewhat astounding. The first one was that 2/3 of the samples of corn were deficient in nitrogen, potassium and zinc. Hmmm. The nitrogen is no surprise. Corn has an almost limited ability to take up nitrogen and use it if there is adequate moisture. Zinc was a bit intriguing, but potassium became the first yellow flag to me. It did not say where these samples had come from, but this was a nationwide testing lab. Soils in Kansas, at least the western 3/4 of Kansas are rarely deficient in potassium. Applications of potassium simply don't show a difference because we have so much potassium in our soils. Now, with that said, I can tell you when to take corn leaf tissue samples to show potassium deficiency. I'll also be very honest in saying that there is a lot that we don't know about tissue testing and how to interpret it. The article went on to say how soybeans were deficient in potassium, remember what I just said, but the test also showed zinc and copper deficiencies. We can have issues with zine, but we just don't see copper issues. The bottom line is don't let these articles scare you. Base fertilization decisions on good soil testing and you'll be fine! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Poison Hemlock

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've started to get questions on poison hemlock control this spring. Poison hemlock is a biennial, or better a winter annual plant. It isn't poisonous to the touch, but it is deadly poisonous if ingested. But most people won't be impacted by this as much as the plant has become far more common over the past 30 years. Hemlock starts growing in the fall and it shows up as a very ferny looking leaf, quite a bit like a carrot leaf because it is in the carrot or parsley family. So this plant gets well established in the fall, overwinters and then about now it starts to grow rapidly. As the spring progresses it will send up a tall flower stalk, often 6 feet tall. The flower stalk is hollow if you cut it down and it is very distinctively green with purple blotches. The flower stalk is covered with white flowers which to me have a rather unpleasant musky odor if you are near a big patch in bloom. Most livestock won't eat it because it is quite unpalable. The biggest problem comes from people who think it is wild parsnip, dig it up, eat the root and then die. It is that poisonous. It's also a pain to kill especially in the spring. If the patch is away from trees use something with Tordon in it Grazon P+D. If it is a waste area with no desirable vegetation you can use glyphosate. Perhaps the best control is with anything that contains metsulfuron like Chaparral, Escort XP and Cimarron Plus. The key is that where you have it now, you will have it again next fall. Remember where those area are and then treat them in late fall, usually during November with any of the products that I already mentioned! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Alfalfa Weevil is ramping up!

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I’m Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you aren't already getting lined up to get your alfalfa sprayed, you probably should be. I'm not saying that there isn't an alfalfa field out there that doesn't have a treatable level of weevils, but I haven't seen it yet. The end oflast week, with alfalfa stems only being 2 to 4 inches long, I was finding over 1 larvae per stem in every field. In fact, in many fields I cold see without bending over that there was damage. I wanted to hold off as long as possible because we may very well still have some eggs hatching out, but we were just seeing too much damage on small alfalfa. About five days after your field is treated you need to be back out checking it over for control effectiveness and for re-infestation. There's a few things that you need to keep in mind. First and foremost, the sprays we use today are only going to work if they get on the weevil larvae which means that they need to be up on the stem. So you want temperatures above 50 degrees and ideally sunshine. The sunshine part may be tough over the next few days but as long as you don't go out first thing in the morning, the temperature part should be okay. The next thing, and commercial applicators don't like this part, is to use plenty of water. For alfalfa this size, 15 gallons per acre should be adequate. If it was 8 inches tall or taller, I really want 20 gallons per acre. Again, we need to get that spray on to the weevil larvae and low volumes just aren't going to hack it. One final thing. If you did a fall treatment, fine. Get back out into those fields and start checking them if you haven't. The weevil are in every field so don't get caught! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I’m Chuck Otte.

Profitability in Cow-calf producers

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I’m Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Several months ago I saw a report on the differences between high, medium and low profit cow-calf producers. It was a study done on all Kansas Farm Management Association members who had identified themselves as having a cow-calf enterprise. Interestingly from 197 5 thru 2014, cow calf producers had average returns of $78 per cow per year. The worst year during that period was 2009 with a loss of $76 per cow and the high, not surprisingly was 2014 when the average return was $589 per cow. Over the 40 year period, returns over variable costs were negative only 11 years. If you add in the fixed costs of depreciation, real estate taxes, unpaid operator labor and an interest charge on assets to get what economists call total costs then returns were positive only 6 years out of 40. It's something we've known all along, but just prefer not to think about. If we can cover the immediate bills, we don't tend to worry about it. Then the economists broke down profitability for the five year period from 2010 to 2014 into high, medium and lower third groups and compared expenses to find out what made the most profitable producers the most profitable producers. Calves sold per cow was very similar as was sale weight and sale price. There was a very modest difference in sales price but we aren't talking huge amounts. Where the big difference came was in production expenses, especially feed costs. The top third spent $131 less on feed than the bottom third. They spent a little more in pasture but in every other category they spent less. So where do you look to trim costs! Start with feed. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I’m Chuck Otte.

Effect of Starter Placement on Com Yield

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Com, because we are planting it in much colder soils resulting in slower seedling development, is far more likely to see a benefit from starter fertilizer usage even when soil nutrient levels seem to be adequate. This has become even more apparent in no or reduced till production. There are many ways to apply starter fertilizer from placing it directly in the furrow to putting it in a band below and to the side of the seed, commonly called a 2 x 2, or with a surface dribble band 2 to 3 inches to the side of the seed row at planting. A preplant broadcast application of fertilizer is not really considered a starter fertilizer treatment. Because nitrogen and potassium fertilizers are salt based, we have long known that if we apply more than 6 to 8 pounds per acre of N plus Kin direct seed contact, we will hurt yield. Studies at the North Central Irrigation Experiment field near Scandia looked at yield effect of placing different N-P-K combination in furrow, in a 2x2 and a surface band. The starter fertilizers used were 5-15-5 mean 5 pounds of Nitrogen, 15 pounds of Phosphorus and 5 pounds of potassium, then a 15-15-5, a 30-15-5, 45-15-5 and a 60-15-15. With in furrow placement, substantial stand loss was noted, especially with 60 pounds of N in furrow. It yielded barely better than the no starter check. The 2x2 ranged from 194 bushels per acre to 216 with an average of 207 and the surface band ranged from 190 to 213 bushels per acre with an average of205. What this study shows us is that 2x2 or surface band placement are going to both give very equal results with any starter fertilizer level. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.