

Drought Declarations

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I had a chance to talk with some of the folks at the FSA office recently trying to find out where we were on drought declarations for the county. What I was told was that Geary County had been declared a livestock disaster category D3. We don't, or at least I don't, know for sure what all this is going to mean but it does mean there will be some payments available. The FSA office is hoping to send out some information on this declaration but they just haven't had time with all the other traditional deadlines due at this time of year. But what you need to be doing right now is tracking absolutely everything that you do in regards to your cattle herds. We may not yet know what all you might get some reimbursement for, but if you don't keep track of it you will be harder pressed to get paid for it later. So keep track of everything you do. If you are hauling water keep track of how much you hauled, how far you hauled it and what days you hauled it. Keep track of hay that you've had to buy. Keep ledgers of how much you bought, what you paid for it, how far you had to truck it - just absolutely everything you had to do. As I said we don't know for sure what all you may get payment for but it's better to keep track of too much and not need it to need it and have no record of it. I've also been tentatively told that once sign-up starts you won't have to be in a hurry. You will have until January to get all your paperwork done. But stay tuned for a letter from the FSA office. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Corn for Silage

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last year we planted nearly 12,000 acres of corn and harvested nearly 11,000 acres for grain. I suspect that we planted that much or more corn this spring but will harvest far less than 11,000 acres for grain. In fact, if it isn't irrigated I'm pretty sure that we probably won't be harvesting it for grain. Drought stressed corn is probably best utilized as silage for several reasons. Nitrates is the first that comes to mind and it alone is a very good reason to consider ensiling. Let's face it. In a year like this any potential forage is at risk of having elevated nitrates. Now, elevated nitrates are not a real issue unless we don't know about them. If we know about them we can manage around them. It doesn't mean the forage is unusable, it just means we may handle it differently. Ensiling can reduce nitrates from 30 to 60%. I normally figure a 40 to 50% reduction will happen. With the corn samples I've seen so far that would move them into the "use without much concern" category. Even with no grain, ensiled drought stressed corn can have crude protein in the 8 to 10% range and often has lower lignin so higher digestibility than standard corn silage. The biggest trick is going to be figuring out moisture content to get it in the silo or the bag in a timely manner. There may be a little trial and error, starts and stops until we get it right. 65 to 70% moisture is what we want to aim for. You can measure moisture with a microwave, ask me to learn how! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Corn for hay or baleage

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Yesterday we talked about harvesting drought stressed corn for silage, so what about other ways to make use of this potential forage source. Grazing of drought stressed corn will be discussed next week, but let's talk about baling corn for hay or as a higher moisture product as baleage. Here's what I'll tell you about baling corn for hay - it's likely going to take a long time to get that stalk dried down enough to be able to bale it without risk of having moldy bales or even being a fire risk. Basically you need to get that corn hay down to about 15% moisture before it can be safely baled and that may take several weeks, weather dependent of course. Then there's also the nitrate consideration. Just cutting it for hay isn't going to change the nitrates in the least. Baleage is another option, but one that we don't use very often in much of Kansas as we usually don't have problem getting forages dried down to make decent storable hay. With baleage you roll up that bale at a moisture level that's slightly lower than when cutting for silage but still in that 45 to 60% range. The bales are then wrapped in plastic and we allow a fairly normal ensiling process to occur. As in the typical ensiling process we will see a reduction in the nitrate level. We'll see the normal improvement in overall feed value that we see when we make silage. The challenge with making baleage is to find someone with the equipment. I know some folks have been working on getting this lined up though, so start asking around! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Potato Leafhoppers

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I feel just a little bit weird talking about insect problems on crops that aren't even really growing. Alfalfa is one of those but I also don't want you to think that drought is keeping your alfalfa from growing when in fact it might be potato leafhoppers. Potato leafhoppers are small lime green insects that we'll find in alfalfa, and other crops. If you walk through an alfalfa field and you see small lime green insects that have a rather herky jerky motion moving out ahead of you, these are potato leafhoppers. The leafhoppers do not overwinter in Kansas, they migrate in from south of here and the first ones were just being detected earlier this month. While we see leafhoppers every year, how bad they will be varies from year to year and only time will tell. Leafhoppers feed by sucking plant juices out of leaves. As they are feeding they inject toxins into the leaf that causes a very distinctive V shaped yellowing of the leaf tips. Not only does their feeding cause the characteristic hopper burn, it also stunts the growth of the plant. Once the growth is stunted, it won't start growing again if it does rain. At that point you are probably best off to swath it, spray the stubble and wait for regrowth. Next week I'd recommend that you walk your alfalfa fields (if you have any growth out there) and look for little yellowish green insects jumping or flying around or the tell tale hopper burn on the leaf tips. If you see this, give me a call so I can come out and sweep the field to get some counts on numbers. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soybean Insects

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Just like it's weird talking about possible alfalfa insect pests when the alfalfa is hardly growing, it is equally weird to be talking about soybean insects right now. But we do have some irrigated soybeans out there and it could start raining again, maybe. Mid-season bean fields can have several potential insect pests. I can guarantee that you have grasshoppers out in your fields. With the exception of field edges we so far seem to be well below treatment thresholds. But, as they say, there's a lot of summer left and we could still be seeing problems develop that would require treatment. It's important to be able to tell the difference between grasshopper damage and bean leaf beetle feeding damage. Grasshoppers will almost always feed starting at the edge of the leaf and work towards the central vein. Bean leaf beetles will invariably chew holes in the middle of leaves on a very random pattern. It takes a lot of leaf feeding to get to the point to justify treatment, especially under the current conditions that we have. There are a couple of caterpillar pests that we could be seeing in soybeans or alfalfa. Garden webworm is one of those. This rascal will pull foliage together with a web, hence it's name webworm, but is generally not going to be found on drought stunted crops. It really needs more foliage than we've got to get cranked up. The yellow-striped armyworm is another we might run into in either beans or alfalfa. Bottom line is don't worry we've got enough other problems with the beans. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.