

## 2018 Farm Bill Outlook

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 good program last week about the progress and the process of the 2018 Farm Bill. You can't turn an all day program into a two minute radio program, but here's some of the highlights that I came away with. Farm Bills are very complex and the actual agriculture part of them is quite small. The vast majority, monetarily wise of a Farm Bill is nutrition programs. And we need to keep nutrition programs as part of the farm bill. Of the 435 congressional districts in the US, 220 of them (slightly over half) are urban districts with zero agriculture. Congressional districts where agriculture is a crucial part of the economy account for all of about 40 districts. Agriculture needs those 220 urban districts and their interest in nutrition programs to get a farm bill passed. Without nutrition in the farm bill, there is no farm bill and the USDA is likely absorbed and disappears into some other government branch that would make no sense! Two very crucial things came out of the farm bill hearings that congress had all across the country. Number 1 - trade is important, very important to agriculture. Without trade agreements grains prices likely plummet to the loan rate and that's not good. #2, Crop Insurance, which is a real insurance program by the way, needs to be kept and not messed with. Crop insurance is not just another government subsidy and it has to meet actuarial standards by law. And the lesson from the last five years - markets are like airplanes, they're always going to come back down! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Wheat Disease Update

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The wheat finally started to green up, at least in some fields, last week. And what goes with green wheat leaves? Yeah, leaf diseases! This winter has been good for wheat growers, other than the lack of moisture, and bad for wheat diseases. Wheat leaf diseases pretty much need live tissue to survive on. We essentially haven't had any in Kansas. They didn't have much in Oklahoma either and not much in northern Texas. But wheat broke dormancy in Texas weeks ago and diseases are starting to build up even as we speak. Texas had their first stripe rust show up about two weeks ago which is later than they've seen in recent years. All of this is not to say we won't have disease pressure. Very scattered leaf rust was seen last week in parts of Oklahoma. Parts of Texas and Oklahoma had some of those recent rains so there's going to be stimulated growth and humidity. All things that will increase the incidence of rust as well as things like powdery mildew tan spot and septoria. What does this mean right now? Absolutely nothing. Adding a half rate of fungicide with the topdress application or herbicide application has reduced the early season incidence of foliar diseases, but hasn't had any impact on yields in the end. Protection of the flag leaf is highly crucial. Over the next month you need to monitor those wheat fields and start to decide which ones have the highest yield potential and which ones have the highest risk of disease. Those are the ones we want to watch! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Hollow stem of wheat

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We always used to talk about needing to get cattle off of winter wheat pasture by jointing as that was when the heads started to move out of the crown and move above ground. Leaving cattle on after this happened would result in cattle eating off those tiny little wheat heads and reducing yield. Now, if you wanted to graze out wheat and not harvest it for grain, this isn't a problem. But if you do want to harvest the grain it is a problem. People had problem learning to identify that tiny wheat head and it only took us about 75 years to figure out it was easier to identify what is right below the tiny head, and that's a hollow stem. If you break the tiller off right at ground level and the stem at that point is hollow, the head has started to move up past that point. Wheat is breaking dormancy late this year as in it just started to green up last week with the warm weather that finally came it. Well, we don't have a lot of cattle on wheat in our area, especially this year. But if you do graze your wheat, you need to move the cattle off of it pretty soon as the crop will be progressing quite rapidly now. But more importantly, that wheat plant is developing those tiny wheat heads. This is a critical time for that wheat and it is really in need of that final shot of fertilizer. If you haven't gotten it applied yet, you really need to get on the ball and get it done. If very much more time goes by, you will have less and less effectiveness of the nitrogen that you applied. So in the next few days, pull the cattle and fertilize! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Wheat herbicides and post wheat cover crops

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The times are changing folks. If you don't believe me it comes down to one question asked me by a long time farmer the other evening. The question was fair and simple. "If I use finesse on my wheat I probably can't plant cover crops can I?" The short answer is probably no, depending on what is in the cover crop mix. Several things stayed with me about this one simple question. We need to be paying attention to cover crops. We are just at the tip of the iceberg about what these cover crops can do for us even if we don't graze them. The diversity of plants in many cover crop mixes bring a diversity of microflora to the soil which is not a bad thing. But to be able to use them, after wheat - which I think may be where they hold the most promise - we need to be very careful with our choice of herbicides in our wheat crop. So many of our highly effective herbicides have extremely long re-cropping intervals. Many of those are the amino acid inhibitors in the Sulfonylurea family. If you've got broadleaf crops or clovers in your cover crop mix, the sulfonylurea group can be death on them, literally. There are exceptions and Harmony is one of them. But we also have things like 2,4-D, dicamba, MCPA, and bromoxynil. Products that have been around for a long time, work very well on small weeds and have nominal re-cropping restrictions. Plan ahead; take time to determine what's next and then you can be more specific about your wheat weed control options this spring! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Additional Thoughts on Farm Bills

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Farm Bills, like elections, roll around every four years, more or less. Even if it takes them five years to get one done, they stay with the numbering system and just keep going. Totally NOT by coincidence, they are written in between presidential elections. Parts of the 2018 farm bill are already passed because they weren't actually in the farm bill legislation - which is yet to be finalized - but the funding for them was moved into the budget bill that already passed. The changes that were initiated to the dairy and cotton programs were in the budget bill. The cost of the programs won't impact the funding on the farm bill. First payments don't occur until October 1, gee, which moves them into the next budget year. The biggest challenge that agriculture faces is the lack of understanding by the public and the critical decision makers - politicians - of food and food production. We've got no one to blame for that but ourselves. The general public does not know where their food comes from. We've spent 150 years growing a raw commodity and not taken the time to help our neighbors understand the connection between your wheat and their bread. So here's the deal. I've got a few years left before I retire. We can't change the world, but we can change things around here. Let's make a little more effort to help our neighbors, whether they live in Junction City, Chapman, Abilene or Fort Riley, to understand the connection between what we do, and the food that they eat. It's not going to be easy and you'll have to extend the hand of friendship. But they want to learn, and we must help them! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.