

Ag Radio Programs for September 17 - 23, 2018

Often it isn't the crops, it's the weeds

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With recent rains we are finding that many of our late summer annual forages, read that to be sudan and forage sorghum, are developing lower and lower nitrate levels. Which is a good thing. But here's what you need to still be aware of. I ran two samples of forage sorghum/sudan through nitrate testing early last week. One was really clean and came back at under 1,000 ppm of nitrates. Very usable by all livestock classes. The second sample was good lush brown midrib forage sorghum that came in at over 7,000 ppm. The difference was the second one also had a lot of pigweeds in it. I'll bet that if we would have separated the sorghum from the weeds, the sorghum would have been in the 4 to 5,000 ppm range and the weeds would have been over 15,000. Doc Haynes and I were talking about this recently and the consensus was that often it isn't the intended crop that causes the nitrate poisoning in cattle - it's the weeds down in the far corner. Or it's the patch of weeds in that dry spot in the field that got swathed and baled. All the bales tested were just fine, but that one bale with all the pigweeds is hotter than a pistol. That gets fed and all of a sudden you've got cows slipping calves or cattle going down with nitrate toxicity. If you are swathing sudan or sorghum and you find a weed patch, just leave it standing, don't harvest it. Scattered weeds here and there in the field don't bother me. But be careful of large areas that have pigweeds and lambsquarter!

This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Don't worry about all those pasture weeds

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've seen the early signs of it coming on and before we get to frost you're going to really see a whole lot of weeds blooming away in pastures. Don't worry about it! The heat and drought from May through early August really suppressed growth of the native grasses. The rain through the last half of August and then earlier this month has really brought on a lot of opportunistic summer annual weeds. Many of these weeds get started every spring and with normal competition from the grasses and desirable native forbs they just don't thrive. This year they had a chance and boy they took it. Many of them, like annual broomweed and even goldenrod, are going to be very very visible through the start of freezing weather. Where do we see these plants blooming every year? Well where there's not a lot of grass growth. Let's put the cause and effect into the right order. The plants got started and thrived because there wasn't a lot of grass growth. They didn't crowd out the grass - other factors came into play to reduce desirable plant growth. These plants took advantage of the lack of competition. Some years it's around water sources or salt and mineral feeders. The cattle congregate, overgraze the grass and the weeds get a foot hold. This year, drought reduced grass growth and lots of areas had open ground for weeds to get started. Don't panic, put the herbicide and the sprayers away. The one place where I hope you don't put the sprayers away though is sericea lespedeza. If you've got it, spray it now! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Wheat Planting Thoughts

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With good soil moisture and previous crops already off some fields, we may have a little more wheat go into the ground this fall. I invariably get asked every fall if it is necessary to use a fungicidal seed treatment. I routinely say yes, but there are some situations that I say demand seed treatments. If you noticed a lot of smut or bunt in a field you kept for seed this year, then absolutely. All of these diseases are easily prevented with a seed treatment. Seed treatments also help with seedling diseases which are going to be a bigger problem in cool wet soils and later planted fields, such as following soybean harvest. If you kept back seed and test weight was a little low, we're going to see a lot of low vigor plants which can be at risk of seedling diseases. We've got quite a few people wanting to push the window and get wheat planted early for some possible grazing later this fall. We know that the Hessian Fly free date is pretty much useless, but wheat planted in mid October does seem to have the best opportunity for maximum yield. But be aware that earlier planted fields are going to be at greater risk to aphid infestations that may carry barley yellow dwarf. If you are planting wheat for grazing, earlier planting does yield more forage, but you may well want to push seeding rates up to 100 pounds per acre. You may also want to increase early season nitrogen for added growth and then follow up with your normal fertilization rates between Thanksgiving and the end of the year. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Planting Depth, Rates and Dates

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In recent years I've seen a lot of wheat stand issues that come down to poor seed placement. When we clean tilled our fields we'd rarely see problems with this, but in the era of no-till, it has become a bit of a problem. Since we moved to semi-dwarf wheats in the late 70s and early 1980s we have had to move our ideal planting depth shallower. But we still need to get that seed placed 1 and ideally 1½ inches deep. You can place seed on top of the ground or barely in the ground and with a good rain or two, it will sprout and start to grow just fine this fall. But a wheat plant needs that space between the seed and the soil surface to develop a crown which is where all the really important roots will develop. Without those secondary roots the wheat plant will fail to keep up in growth next spring and then you'll be calling me to find out what's wrong. The biggest problem I find is planting into soybean residue. The fine residue of soybeans tends to congregate unevenly and then you wind up with seeds being under the residue, but not into the soil. Tractor speed can affect planting depth and most planters are designed to operate best at 5 to 6 mph. Going faster can cause the openers to ride up causing issues. For maximizing grain yield, planting from October 10th to October 20th is probably the really sweet zone. Planting rates should start at 70 to 80 pounds per acre and as we move past October 20th they need to increase 10 to 15% per week up to a maximum of 120 pounds per acre. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Crop Rotation Considerations

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Fall harvest hasn't really even started yet but I'm sure a lot of producers are already thinking and planning for what crops they will be planting in what fields this fall and next spring. This could be challenging based on the weather that we've had over the past 12 months. My biggest concern is the potential for herbicide carryover. Up through August 1st we had had very little opportunity for normal residual herbicide degradation. Herbicide activity degrades over time based on soil moisture and soil temperature. Recropping restrictions are solely based on average conditions. Even though we've had above normal rainfall for August and September, and fairly normal temperatures, what we haven't had is the time. The best way to know if it is safe to plant a different crop than what was in the field most recently is a bioassay. You just go out and gather up some soil, put it in a bucket and plant some seeds in it. If the seeds come up and survive for a month, you're okay to plant. Another way is to look at the normal recropping restrictions. If the restrictions are 4 or 5 months or less, you can probably switch to some other crop. If the restrictions are 14 months or more, you may want to be leery of it UNLESS you run a bioassay. The good news is that for your spring crops, there's still time to do that bioassay. With wheat though you may want to be a little bit more cautious. If you still have a crop in the potential wheat field, pull some soil right now and get a bioassay started just to be sure! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.