

Get Ready for Alfalfa Planting, Soil pH

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We have entered the alfalfa planting season. If you are going to plant some alfalfa this fall the very first thing you need to do is to pull some soil samples for a soil test. Failure of new plantings of alfalfa to thrive generally come down to two factors, low soil pH and low phosphorus levels. A soil sample for alfalfa isn't hard. You just need to pull samples from the top 3 inches from about a dozen areas, mix it all up, pull out one pint of soil and bring it in to the extension office. As a legume alfalfa is not well suited to soil pH much below 6.2. The bacteria that do the nitrogen fixing and nodulation just don't survive well in even moderately acid soils. If you have a low pH in the soil of your future alfalfa field you need to get it limed, and that lime incorporated before you plant. Liming it after the fact may help a little but not enough. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Get Ready for Alfalfa Planting, Phosphorus

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Yesterday we talked about soil testing for new alfalfa plantings and the importance of liming soil to raise the soil pH for the nitrogen fixing bacteria. The other reason to raise the soil pH is to make sure that the phosphorus is more readily available. Acid soils tie up phosphorus in the soil. But we also need to test that soil for phosphorus levels. Alfalfa is a heavy phosphorus user. Every ton of alfalfa removes 12 pounds of phosphorus. It is so important to have plenty of phosphorus available at planting time and the best way to do this is to incorporate the phosphorus with the lime, apply it with the drill or surface apply and drill over the top of it. Phosphorus does not move readily into the soil so incorporation is preferable and the soil test will let us know how much we need to apply. And remember annual fall applications as well! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Disease Pressure in Corn

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. As we grow more corn we are seeing more disease pressure and more pressure from commercial applicators to apply fungicide for disease control. The most crucial time for fungicide application is tasseling to early blister stage. Once corn has reached dent stage, which a lot of it in our area has, it is very unlikely that you will see any economic return on your fungicide investment. And as corn reaches black layer, you simply WON'T see any economic return. I know that there are a few late planted fields out there that may not quite be to blister stage yet and certainly not to dent. In these fields I would certainly want to be scouting especially for southern rust, don't confuse it with common rust, and if you are seeing more than 30% of the plants with southern rust in the upper canopy, call in the plane and get it sprayed. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Too Late for Treating Trees, Unless...

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I've received several inquiries over the past couple of weeks about treating trees in pastures. Basically we are past the time of year for foliar treating trees and woody shrubs in pastures. We aim to treat these plants when they have reached full leaf stage normally from the end of May through mid to late June. After that time the leaves tend to get a thick waxy cuticle on the leaves that really inhibit the uptake of foliar applied herbicides. HOWEVER, there is one exception to this rule and that is in areas that were mowed and hayed in July or early August. We tend to get a lot of regrowth on woody plants that were mowed off in the haying process. As these plants send up new shoots and they are putting out new fresh leaves that do not have that waxy layer. So once they've grown for 4 to 6 weeks, go ahead and spray them! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Is Early Weaning Right For Your Herd?

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We are still 6 to 10 weeks ahead of when most cattle producers are normally weaning calves. Every once in a while we'll get people talking about early weaning of calves. Early weaning is normally done for one of two reasons: for the benefit of the cow or for the benefit of the pasture. We've had good rain for most of our pastures around here but that doesn't preclude an overstocked pasture where forage is getting slim. If you need to destock a pasture and don't want to spend the next two months feeding elsewhere, consider early weaning and an early sale of those calves. Because of the difference between what a calf is eating in forage and what a dry cow needs for forage, every four days that a calf isn't in the pasture gives one more day of forage for the cow. So early weaning, gains you more pasture time for the cow. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.