

### Check Soil pH Before Planting Alfalfa

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We're about to alfalfa planting season. The mistake that I see nearly every year, and one that is not cheaply fixed is when alfalfa is seeded into a field where the pH is below 6.5. When a field is acidic and ag lime is applied pre-seeding and tilled into the soil it is a very easy thing to fix. But once the alfalfa is planted and out of the ground and just sitting there not growing, there isn't much we can do but to start over. And that gets expensive! Grab a soil sample now and let's get it tested. There's still time to do that and get lime applied if we need it. The two other things that can make or break a new stand of alfalfa is making sure that the seed is properly inoculated with the proper nitrogen fixing bacteria strain and then making sure we have adequate levels of phosphorus. If we get these three things right, good things will follow! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

## Liquid Calcium vs Ag Lime

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Yesterday I was talking about checking soil pH before planting alfalfa. If we need to get that soil pH corrected, as in raised so it isn't too acidic then we need to use ag lime to accomplish that. Ag lime acts as a buffer, much like antacids help to neutralize your excess stomach acid. I routinely see ads for liquid calcium products with all sorts of wild claims saying that 2 to 5 gallons of this stuff per acre can raise soil pH .6 to 1.3 pH points. Don't believe it for a second. One gallon of the liquid lime products normally has about a pound of calcium carbonate equivalent and costs about the same as one ton of ag lime that would have 800 to 1000 pounds of calcium carbonate equivalent. A few gallons of high priced liquid calcium simply won't do the job and you'll be left with an acid soil that still needs ag lime to fix! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

## Sorghum Midge Watch

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Sorghum midge is a tiny little reddish fly that can really raise problems for sorghum producers. We rarely have issues with it and I don't think we will this year, but it would be good to kind of keep an eye on sorghum fields this year as there is a growing outbreak in southwest Kansas. The sorghum midge lays eggs in sorghum heads as they are flowering. The midge larva eats the tiny seeds before they even have a chance to develop so you wind up with heads that are relatively blank. This is different than the sorghum heads that get eaten by birds where there is often still a bit of a shell from where the glumes were around the seed. If you start to see heads that simply aren't developing seeds give me a call so I can come out and check the fields while we still have a chance to diagnose the problem for future action! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

## Fall Climate Outlook

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I spend a lot of time following the weather and monitoring the climate prediction center's monthly and seasonal forecasts. Right now they are showing the September, October, November time frame to be warmer and drier than normal. This same pattern has been showing up regularly in recent years in fact the past two years the September and October rainfall has been well below normal. While this can often make for good harvest conditions It can also cause some consternation when we are trying to get wheat planted. I would encourage you to somewhat ignore soil moisture conditions and just get your wheat planted when you have the opportunity. If it gets to the last week of September and you've got fields ready, get the seed in the ground. If you're planting in dust, have faith that we'll get rain soon! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

## Nitrate Testing

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It's gotten to that time of year when we are looking at haying some forage sorghum or millet or even grazing some as producers look at bringing cattle off pasture early. Late summer and forages like these should always raise a yellow caution flag because of potential nitrate issues. Prussic acid issues could come up with small regrowth but for right now nitrates are what we need to be concerned about. First two samples were sent to labs for testing early last week and the reports on these early tests were all good with both samples coming in below 400 ppm. Concern starts at 3,000 ppm. Nitrates can change rapidly in plants due to weather conditions, drought and stage of growth. Since we did have good early season growing conditions this helps reduce concern though. But just to be certain, testing is a good idea! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.