

Don't Cut It Low

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In the 1830s the sicklebar mower was invented and revolutionized forage harvest. These machines had a flaw in that if you hit something too hard it would break a tooth out and then you had to replace it! Because of this forage harvesters kept the sickle bar up well off the ground. About a century and a half later the disc mower came along with faster harvest speeds and the ability to run the cutting height lower because rocks and obstructions are less likely to damage the cutting mechanism. Which has led to brome grass and native hay being harvested lower than it should be! As we move into native haying season, and I've seen plenty down already which is good, I urge forage harvesters to keep that cutting height at three inches or above. You aren't leaving that much hay in the pasture and the grasses will recover faster! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Plan Ahead for Alfalfa Planting

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the saddest things I run into, nearly annually, is a new field of alfalfa that just isn't performing well. We do a soil test and sure enough, the pH is too acidic and the phosphorus level is often too low. Once the alfalfa is in the ground it's very difficult to remedy these things, especially the low soil pH. A simple soil test in late July or early August, ahead of alfalfa planting time, would let us know that these are problems that need to be addressed and pre-plant it's a pretty quick fix. If you are planning to plant some alfalfa this late summer or fall, take the time now to get out there and pull a soil sample. Bring in a pint of soil total collected from several different locations, we'll send it to K-State for a basic analysis and in a few days we can have you lined out on what you need to add to your soil to get a good stand of alfalfa going! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Too Late for Soybeans

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I ran into a producer over the weekend who asked what the cut off date was for double crop soybean planting. I said it was basically the 4th of July and they paused for a minute and said - so it's too late now. Yeah, it's too late now. IF, and here's a might big if, we knew that September was going to be wet and warm, and that frost wouldn't get here until early November, you may still get some beans squeezed in. You could get a shorter maturity group and plant that which would give you plants 4 inches tall and setting pods - I don't want to harvest those!! But if you were to plant now you are basically looking at a high likelihood of sitting around with a bin full of half green beans that may or may not color up properly by spring. No, it's time to just write off double crop much of anything and concentrate on other activities! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Maximize the Value of Harvested Forages

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We spend a lot of time swathing and baling alfalfa, brome and prairie hay, even various sorghums to have as feed for cattle. The cost for this haying processes is much higher than many producers think it is. All of this hay gets put up and then often, well over 25% of it is wasted due to improper storage or feeding. You can do everything right with timing and technique to make great quality hay only to mess it up. The first way is through spoilage especially with big round bales. One third the weight of those big bales is in the outer 6 inches and 50% in the outer 12 inches. What seems like just a little spoilage can ruin a lot of hay. Store bales where there is good drainage, on top of 3 to 4 inches of crushed rock, and then stack end to end. Don't stack the bales and keep the rows three feet apart for good air flow! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Managing Cattle Heat Stress

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Hot summer days aren't just hot for us, they're hot for cattle as well. Heat stress in cattle is a combination of temperature, humidity, wind speed and solar radiation. Heat stress can occur during the night as well as during the day. While we can't do too much about most of the things that cause heat stress, we can help cattle out in many ways. Making sure they have access to shade is great, which is one reason I never recommend removing every single tree in a pasture. Making sure that they have plenty of access to fresh water is crucial. If you are feeding cattle you actually increase their heat load due to digestion for 4 to 6 hours. Feed early in the morning or late in the day to move that extra heat load out of hot periods. Lastly keep an eye on conditions at Kansas Mesonet. Click on Animal Comfort to see up to the minute conditions. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.