

## **Maybe It's Time to Unplug For the Weekend**

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Here we are at the end of the summer with a three day weekend. Does it seem to anyone else like we just celebrated Memorial Day and the end of the school year? I'm sure that everyone's summer was on fast forward like mine was. It doesn't help that smart phones and various digital devices keep us "connected" day in and day out, weekdays and weekends alike. I've often felt that the phones may be smart, but the users may be questionable! The more connected we are the more we feel like we HAVE to respond to that text or that email or even that phone call no matter when, no matter where, no matter why!

In the interest of our mental health, maybe this is the weekend that you unplug or go offline for the weekend. You take the cell phones and you actually turn them off, all the way off, and then you lock them up out of reach for the weekend or at least for a day or two. Make the family have real face to face conversations. If you children's friends want to talk to them, then they can come over and visit for an hour. Gosh, how barbaric you may say. But what a great way to really get to know your kid's friends!

Technology can cut down the miles to milliseconds. I can Skype my buddy in North Carolina, see how his house remodeling is going and find out what he did today. I can email my sister in Omaha and find out what she's up to tonight. I can look at my cousin's Facebook page in California and see how his new shop is progressing. But what happens when the internet goes down? What happens if I lose my phone? What happens if I just turn it and the computer and maybe even the television off for 24 hours?

The social media world can keep us in touch with literally millions of people around the world 24/7. Granted, it isn't going to go away and it's only going to become more so. If you are in business you have to have a Twitter account, a Facebook page and who knows whatever else is going to come along next. It's the way of the future and every media guru says it's going to stay that way. But maybe, just maybe, all that instant contact, that instant information where we can hear everyone's opinion of what's happening in Syria round the clock, is only helping crank up that fast forward on life. Maybe every once in a while we just have to step off the information superhighway and the social media merry-go-round and look at life unplugged.

Don't worry about anything but your family for a day or two. The events around the world aren't going to change one bit if I don't watch the news for a day or two. It's okay to go and take a walk without that cell phone on your hip, in your hand or sticking out of your pocket. Sit down with the family and watch a football or baseball game together. Get together with friends for coffee or lunch or invite them over for a cookout. Take that walk and notice how nature is starting to look like late summer or the beginning of fall. Listen to the cicadas in the late afternoon. We're only going to have these large choruses for a couple of more weeks and then it'll start to soften and be gone by early October. Enjoy the heat and humidity because we both know that we'll be complaining about cooler weather soon enough.

Life will return to full speed come Tuesday morning when we're all headed back to work. But for a day, or two, or three, unplug from the 24/7/365 race and enjoy the world and the people around you. Take a day off from everything and do nothing, but relax and enjoy the Labor Day weekend!