

A County Agent's Christmas Wish List

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Having once been a Scrooge, I used to detest wish lists at this time of year. I felt that they were just a way of trying to extort gifts from people. Now that I'm a reformed Scrooge, I view them slightly differently. I've also achieved that age where the gifts that I dream of, are less physical in nature and a bit more esoteric or philosophical in nature. So what do I want at Christmas time? Here we go!

How about average weather to start the list with? In the great plains, normal does not exist, although I often refer to "normal" in my weather summaries. What we actually have are averages and averages are made up of wild extremes. You run a 30 year average of these extremes and that becomes "normal". I'd settle for average rainfall throughout an entire year. Well, I'd settle for it if it was evenly distributed through each month. We will end the year with above average rainfall. The problem is the extremes. We had a lot of rainfall in May and June and then very little rainfall during crucial crop growth periods in the mid to late summer. Then we had extreme rainfall in November and December. We had a pretty good crop year, but if we could have just spread that rainfall more evenly through the growing season...

Next on my list is a more food educated public. Far too few people understand the science of food production, the science of nutrition, and the science of the environmental and social impact of both of those. Far too many people chase fads. They hear in the media or on social networks that GMOs are bad, so they shun them, even when they don't know what they are. Whatever internet guru is talking the loudest, or has the most "likes", is who they listen to. Most of these internet gurus are spouting opinion or using faux science to support their point of view. Or worse yet, using these to sell you something that you don't need.

We need to spend time learning about how food is produced and processed. When I say produced, I mean go back to the farmer. Understand how plants/animals are grown, the crucial items that those farmers/ranchers have to deal with including pests and the uncertainty of the weather and markets. We need to learn more about the science of nutrition, not fads, but the science. That includes balanced nutrition and that magic word, moderation! By the way, someone trying to sell you something should be viewed with a great deal of skepticism.

Last thing on my list is calmness and respect. We have become an agitated and scared society. It doesn't help that we have every media outlet in the world spouting out who we should be scared of and why. When we become agitated and scared, calmness and respect go out the window. We start to become scared of people because of how they look, not because of who they are. How many stereotypes can we toss out there right now as examples of who to be afraid of. Every culture, every religion, every social group has good representatives and bad representatives. Yet most of them are no different than us. They want safety and security, they want a future for their children and they want to know that there will be food on their plate tomorrow.

Whatever holiday you observe at this time of year is likely based on peace, hope and love. Anger, agitation and distrust have no place in your holiday. Look for peace, look for acceptance and recognize that we are all far more similar, than we are different no matter where in this little world we are from. May peace, joy and love greet you in this season.