



# Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

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## Lawn Stressed?

*Kyler Langvardt & K-State Research and Extension News Service*

Cool-season grasses, like the Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue lawns common to many parts of Kansas, have had about enough of summer.

The state's high temperatures and sporadic rainfall often cause cool-season varieties to become thin by summer's end. September typically signals a good time to replenish those stands, said Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham.

"Start by mowing the grass short (1 to 1 ½ inches) and removing the clippings," he said. "This will make it easier to achieve good seed-soil contact and increase the amount of light that will reach the young seedlings."

Then, he says, check the lawn's layer of thatch – an organic layer of dead and living shoots, stems and roots that develops between the zone of green vegetation and the soil surface.

"Normally, we'd want ¼ inch of thatch or less when overseeding," Upham said. "If the thatch layer is ¾ inch or more, it is usually easier to use a sod cutter to remove it and start over with a new lawn. A power rake can be used to reduce a thatch layer that is less than ¾ inch, but more than ¼ inch."

### Preparing the soil

Once thatch is under control, Upham said homeowners can use a hand rake to roughen up soil in small areas. For larger areas, he suggests either a verticut machine

or core aerator.

"A verticut machine has solid vertical blades that can be set to cut furrows in the soil," he said. "A slit seeder is a verticut machine with a seed hopper added so the soil prep and seeding operation are combined."

By contrast, a core aerator literally punches holes in the soil, depositing the cores on the surface of the ground.

"Each hole produces an excellent environment for seed germination and growth," Upham said. "Make 3-4 passes with the core aerator to ensure enough holes for the seed."

A core aerator also reduces the amount of water needed to germinate the seed. Aeration increases the water infiltration rate, decreases compaction and increases the amount of oxygen in the soil.

"Of the three methods (for large areas), I prefer the slit seeder for obtaining good seed to soil contact," Upham said. "However, if watering is difficult, core aeration may be a better option."

Upham noted that fertilizer should be applied to the lawn at rates suggested on the bag, regardless of which overseeding method is used.

For more questions relating to your lawn, garden or home, call Kyler Langvardt at our office.



# Medicare Information For This Season



Deb Andres, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

## New to Medicare Workshop - Register Now!

Are you approaching your 65th Birthday and wondering what to do with all the contradictory information about Medicare you are getting in the mail? This free program offers those approaching Medicare Age (65) answers to the many questions they have about the Medicare enrollment process and how Medicare fits in with their current employment status and/or health care coverage.

**What:** New to Medicare Workshop

**Where:** Dorothy Bramlage Public Library

**When:** 3:00PM – 5:00PM

**Cost:** FREE!

Call us at (785) 238-4161 to register today!

## Medicare Q&A

**Q:** If I will have TRICARE for Life once I reach 65, do I need to sign up for Medicare?

**A:** YES! You will need to sign up for both Part A and Part B. Most people approaching age 65 will need to initiate the enrollment. It is not an automatic process, but for a few exceptions.

Once enrolled, you will get a Medicare Card in the mail from the Social Security Administration. You must also get a new military ID when you turn 65 which will show you are eligible for TRICARE. Neither of the two will cover vision and dental, which can be purchased separately. TRICARE **will** cover prescription drugs.

TRICARE works as a supplement to Original Medicare. You will need to show both your Medicare card and your military ID to your medical providers.

# The Importance of Drinking Water



Deb Andres, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Hydration is important to keep the body functioning properly. The amount of water needed by each person in your family varies considerably. In general, the amount of water to drink every day can be calculated based on weight. When calculating how much water to drink, divide your weight in pounds in half. This number represents how many ounces of water you should drink in that day. For example, if your child weighs 40 pounds, he or she should drink 20 ounces of water per day.

Depending on the weather and levels of exercise, you may need to adjust the number of ounces of water. Some water can also be taken into the body through foods you eat. With a healthy and well-balanced diet, about 20% of water consumption is from food.

When to drink water:

- With every snack or meal.
- When your child comes home from school.
- After your child comes in from playing outside.
- Throughout the day -- keep a bottle of water in the car, at your desk, and in your child's backpack.

*\*Mayo Clinic. (2022). Water. Retrieved from [www.mayoclinic.com/health/water/NU00283](https://www.mayoclinic.com/health/water/NU00283)*



**THANK YOU TO ALL SUPPORTERS WHO MADE  
THE 2023 GEARY COUNTY FAIR POSSIBLE!**

# Nitrate Toxicity in Drought-Stressed Corn and Sorghum



*Kansas State University Agronomy e-Update*

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Drought-stressed crops such as corn and sorghum tend to accumulate high nitrate levels in the lower leaves and stalk of the plant. Nitrates accumulate in the lower portion of these plants when stresses reduce crop yields to less than expected, based on the supplied nitrogen fertility level. Nitrate toxicity in livestock is because of its absorption into the bloodstream and binding to hemoglobin, rendering it unable to carry oxygen throughout the body. The result is eventual asphyxiation and death.

## **Forage testing**

It is wise for producers to test their drought-stricken forage prior to harvest. Levels of nitrates can increase in drought-stressed plants after a rain and delaying harvest may be beneficial. Nitrate testing can be done through several labs, including the K-State Soil Testing Laboratory. Harvesting the forage 6-to-12 inches above the ground to avoid the highest concentrations of nitrate in the plant is a good practice. Producers should collect a good representative forage sample above this cutting height to get an accurate determination of the nitrate concentration. Factors to consider in setting the harvest height would include actual nitrate concentration, storing and feeding methods, and forage availability. Toxicity is related to the total amount of nitrate in the diet (including water) and how quickly it is eaten, but, generally, if forages contain more than 6,000 ppm nitrate, they should be considered potentially toxic. Animals under physiological stress (sick, hungry, lactating, or pregnant) are more susceptible to nitrate toxicity than healthy animals.

## **Management options**

Depending on the planned feeding method, a producer may wish to harvest different parts of the plant. If wrapping the forage into a bale and feeding it directly to livestock, a producer may want to test the lowest part of the stalk to determine the greatest risk of nitrate forage that the animal could ingest. If a producer was planning on grinding the

bale, a whole-plant sample above what will be left in the field might be a more accurate representation of what will be eaten. If a harvested forage is high in nitrate, grinding and mixing the feed with another forage such as prairie hay or brome will dilute the total nitrates in the animal's diet and could potentially reduce the risk of poisoning.

If parts of the field show more stress and potentially differ in nitrate concentration, baled forage from those areas can be segregated. Mark bales and retain their identity in storage. Resample and test for nitrates and forage quality in each field and subgroup separately to determine safe and cost-effective feeding options. While the nitrate concentration does not change after hay harvest, the variability of nitrates across a field and the challenge of collecting a truly representative sample pre-harvest make a thorough post-harvest sample imperative.

High-nitrate forages chopped for silage and properly ensiled are a safer option for livestock feeding. During the ensiling process, potentially 50 percent of the nitrates in the forage will be metabolized by the microbes and can vastly reduce the risk of poisoning. Leaving 6 inches of stubble in the field is still not a bad idea. That is the portion of the stem with the highest concentration of nitrates.

Grazing high nitrate forages can be a dangerous practice. Grazing pressure should be limited so that animals do not consume the parts of the plant forage testing shown to be dangerous. Although animals tend to consume the leaves and the top portions of the plant, which contain less nitrates, the risk of consuming a high-nitrate portion of the plant still exists. In addition, the longer the animal is left on a field and the more that animal is forced to eat the remaining forage at the lower portions of the plant, the greater risk of nitrate poisoning.

For more information, call the Geary County Extension Office.

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& THE PREMIUM AUCTION, VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE***



## UPCOMING AREA EVENTS:

### **Geary Community Farmers Market:**

Hosted by Live Well Geary, the Geary County Market is now open. The Geary County K-State Research & Extension SNAP-Ed program will have a resource and program sign-up booth every first and third Thursday. Market location: JC Naz Church parking lot; 1025 South Washington – Junction City; Thursdays, 4:00 - 7:00 pm; May through October.

### **Kansas State Fair:**

Find your fun and celebrate all things Kansas at the Kansas State Fair. From the opening bell to the final grandstand blockbuster, it's a play-day hay-day! 4-Hers from around the state, including Geary County, will be showcasing their projects on the state level. Join us in Hutchinson September 8-17.

### **Paint the Town Blue:**

Saturday, September 23rd, join Main Street Junction City to kick off homecoming week at a Community Parade and Spirit Rally. This event will take place in Downtown Junction City starting at 10 a.m.



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