

Wheat Emergence and Stand Establishment

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Most of the earlier planted wheat fields appear to be coming up pretty good right now and the fields that I've looked at are showing really good uniform emergence and good plant development, so far. We have several common problems with wheat plant emergence. Crusting is one and for the most part we haven't had a lot of the conditions that can cause serious crusting. Seed being too deep either from poor planter adjustment or soil washing into the seed furrow is going to be the second most common problem. For the most part we seem to have good soil moisture conditions this year so dry seed beds shouldn't be an issue either. If emergence is slow or spotty, get out and start digging. If the soil surface is hard and you can find sprouts coming up to the surface but not coming through, then crusting is likely the culprit. If you find the coleoptile, that hard sheath that is the first thing coming up from the seed, and then a leaf that is scrunched up and crinkly, you've probably got seed that is too deep. We can also have insect or disease problems, but if you used a seed treatment I wouldn't expect either of these. We can also have herbicide carryover where plants emerge and die or just don't show up. If you aren't sure what's happening, give me a call! The good news is that if you do have poor stand establishment there is still time to replant without suffering much, if any, yield loss. Seeding rates will need to be increased, but we still have time!

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Soil Compaction at Harvest

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We have absolutely perfect conditions this fall for some really bad soil compaction. Sloppy muddy conditions at harvest actually provide less opportunity for compaction as it is just too wet for the soil particles to get pressed together and stay there. There's just too much fluid in the soil. A fall like this, with some soil moisture, but not excessive, is excellent for packing that soil down. If you think about the size of our harvesting equipment there is no surprise that we have compaction. A moist soil can be compacted to a depth greater than 18 inches by a 10 ton axle load. A 1,050 bushel grain cart, fully loaded is going to weigh over 75,000 pounds. Even with a tandem axle, that's 17.6 tons per axle and that WILL cause some serious compaction. A 12 row combine full of grain exceeds 20 tons per axle. Unless you go back to a 6 row combine, you will have compaction. The trick is to reduce compaction as much as possible. Keep grain carts at the ends of the field on those end rows. 70 to 90% of the total compaction is going to occur with that very first wheel pass, so try to keep using the same tracks as much as possible. Multiple passes over the same track will cause slight increases in the compaction, but at least you're keeping it to one location. Getting rid of compaction is very difficult. Freezing and thawing is way over rated in dealing with deep compaction. Wetting and drying is better but very infrequent. Deep tillage may help, but the soil must be dry. Bottom line is that our big equipment is going to cause compaction, and we'll have to deal with it! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Grazing Crop Residue

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One thing that I always feel we should be doing more of is grazing crop residue. Corn and sorghum residue can give some good fall forage especially for spring calving cow herds. Nutritional needs for these cows in fall, especially early to mid fall, are fairly low and stalks can be a great fit at very low cost. If the stalks and cows are your own, the only added expense is going to be putting up fence if a suitable fence isn't already present. If you own the cows but not the stalks then you have rental fees plus fencing. If you own the stalks, you may actually wind up saving some stalk chopping charges, if you do that, the rent is then essentially just candy! Sorghum and corn stalks are not the same however. Corn stover tends to be more fragile and should be utilized first. Which often works out just fine because corn stalks are usually available much earlier in the season. Surprisingly, in general, sorghum stalks will have higher crude protein but digestibility will be similar between the two. We generally figure that stalks will provide 1.5 to 2 animal unit months or AUMs. Just as a reminder, one AUM is the amount of forage required to sustain a 1,000 pound cow for one month. As the size of the cow increases, their AUM needs increase proportionately. An 1100 pound cow would be 1.1 AUM, a 1200 pound cow 1.2 AUMs and so on. To be conservative, figure one cow per acre per month on corn stalks. Corn stalks shouldn't have any nitrate concerns this year and the sorghum tested so far is also low, but wait until a good hard freeze on the sorghum because of prussic acid potential. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.