

What Variety Selection - How Do You Choose?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It always frustrates me that we often need to make decisions on wheat variety selection about a week before we can get our hands on the wheat variety trial results. They are slowly coming on line and if you type Kansas Wheat Variety trials into your favorite internet search engine, it'll help you get to the web page where you can see what trials have been analyzed and are on line. I'm not going to tell you which varieties to plant. But I want you to look at more than just yield. Yield is important but look also at multi year yields. Any one variety in any one year at one location has the potential to top the list. So looking at several years worth of data, when available, as well as look at several nearby locations. For our area I like to look at Riley County as well as Saline, Republic and Mitchell counties. Any of these sites will replicate the conditions that we have locally. Those are probably the four sites that have the most impact on me when determining varieties to watch. I also want to look at maturity. We don't want a variety that's too early as we can have issues with early breaking of dormancy. Look for early mid to mid maturity varieties. Later maturing varieties, like those from our neighbor to the north, often get hammered when it turns off hot and dry in early to mid June. Finally, look at disease resistance. Soil borne and spindle streak resistance are crucial. All of our fields are infested with these viruses. I will look at stem and leaf rust resistance but I think we sometimes ignore yield opportunities by chasing leaf disease resistance because we don't want to spray fungicides. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Time to make hay

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We had good early season rainfall to get the native hay meadows growing and enough rain in June to keep it going, thankfully, and now it's time to start getting those native hay meadows swathed and baled. IF you want to make feed quality hay, as opposed to mulch hay or bedding hay, I think we need to look at harvesting hay from mid July to mid August. This is the period of time when we find the best balance between tonnage and crude protein. From now through mid August, tonnage will increase, although not as much as you think it might, but crude protein will easily drop 1.5 to 2 percentage points. And when you are starting with something that is only 8 or 9% crude protein losing a couple points of crude protein can take hay from a usable forage to bedding. So it comes down to what you want to use that hay for. Now, the other part of that equation is what's good for the native hay meadow. To keep a grass stand healthy you need six weeks of good growing condition post harvest to get the grass regrown and food reserves in the root system restored. In most years the native grass meadows are going to be shutting down by the end of September or very early October. So you really need to shut down haying about August 15th. But here's a kicker - if you are really interested in bedding hay or mulch hay, wait to harvest until after October 15th. By then the grass has shut down and anything that happens then doesn't impact the grass. And you get more tons of hay. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Plan now for alfalfa planting

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As we head towards August it's time to remember that if you want to get some new alfalfa established, August is the time to do that. In general we want alfalfa planted between mid August and mid September, but the best new seedings I've seen over the years have been planted the last two weeks of August. Good stand establishment starts with a soil test. The biggest issue for new seedings seems to always be soil pH and/or low phosphorus levels. I've lost track of the number of times I have looked at new alfalfa seedings that weren't doing well and a soil test indicated a pH level below 6. Alfalfa is a legume and needs a pH of 6.5 or above. Once that alfalfa is planted, it's awfully hard to adjust that soil pH, so let's take care of it before we plant. The slickest way that I've seen to seed new alfalfa is to no-till it into wheat stubble. If no lime needs to be added you can plant right into the standing stubble, or, this is about the only time I'll say this, if you don't have a good no till drill, burn off the stubble just before planting and then drill into the smoldering remains. If you are planting roundup ready alfalfa, then follow the seed guidelines for how soon to treat. A small percentage of that seed simply isn't glyphosate tolerant and you want to get those seedlings out of there soon. If you aren't using roundup ready seed you may want to give serious consideration to using a preplant herbicide. Many of these need to be incorporated so leave yourself enough time to lime, fertilize and incorporate. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Mid-season pasture evaluation

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Assuming that you have cattle in pastures from early May thru late October, then the first of August is the half way point through the season. Which means it is time to do an evaluation of pasture condition. When I do a pasture evaluation in early August, I want to look at several things. How much forage is still out there? I want to see a good balance between grasses and forbs. If grasses are few and far between, then there is a problem and we need to be getting cattle out of the pasture. If there's nothing left in the pasture over 1 inch tall then we REALLY have a problem and you need to empty the pasture right now (and I have seen that in early August!) I also want to look at the grazing distribution within the pasture. If all of the grazing continues to be in just one or two locations and the rest of the pasture is virtually untouched, we need to figure out why and how can we get the cattle to other parts of the pasture. That may be something as easy as moving a salt block or a lick tub, or it may involve throwing in a hot wire and adding a water tank. This is also a good time to be evaluating the cattle, especially for fly control purposes. With the heavy rains in June I'm betting that fly problems have really picked up in the past couple of weeks and fly control in some form or another can be easily justified. Under average stocking rates I honestly expect pastures to be looking pretty good up to now. If you are seeing some issues, then we need to start discussing stocking rates, grazing pressure and start making corrective actions while there's still time in this pasture season! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Come to the fair

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Next week is the annual Geary County Free Fair. Events get started on Monday afternoon and evening of the 24th, really get rolling on Tuesday and then wrap up the evening of the 27th. The horse show is Monday evening the 24th. The beef show is Tuesday evening the 25th. The sheep and swine show are Wednesday evening the 26th and the livestock and project auction are Thursday evening the 27th. The annual BBQ and watermelon feed are all slated for Thursday evening so cross your fingers for good weather but come on out anyway. I'm sure all the kids want to know that the Pedal Tractor Pull is Monday night the 24th. Over the years I have really come to appreciate our fair. I've been to a lot of county fairs in my years in several different states. I've had the privilege to even judge in a lot of county fairs over the years. What makes the Geary County Free Fair so special to me is that the focus isn't on a carnival or grand stand shows. It isn't about a demo derby or lots of commercial booths. What it does focus on is the 4-Hers, their projects and what they've learned. It's a 72 hour mini community of people from all across the county who come together to see the works of these young men and women, catch up with friends and neighbors, unplug and just relax for a few hours. For the kids, the four days go by way too fast. For the Extension Office staff, and many of the volunteers, the time may not go by fast enough. But the time is about right, and the focus is correct. So don't come to the Extension office Tuesday, or Wednesday next week. We'll be at the fair! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.