

Topdressing Wheat, timing, rates, and source

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that we really need to be proactively planning to get wheat topdressed if you didn't do it in December. For most of our soils, wheat should be topdressed far enough in advance of jointing so that the nitrogen has a chance to get moved into the root zone ready for the roots to take it up when the plant moves into the rapid growth phase it goes through at jointing. If rainfall is reliable, or the wheat is irrigated, then you can do this shortly after greenup. But all too often we maybe wait until too far into March, and then we hit a dry spell, the wheat starts to joint and the nitrogen is still sitting on the soil surface. I really feel that most years we need to be fertilizing either in December or as early in February as we can. As for source, most producers are going to use dry urea or UAN solutions. Years of test have shown both to be equally effective. If you are applying a herbicide, then you'll have to use UAN. If you have heavy residue there is some advantage to using urea as the fertilizer prills will usually drop down through the residue to the soil surface and won't be subject to immobilization on the residue. As to rate, that can be a complex question. Most producers under-fertilize their wheat crop. Most of today's varieties can hit 100 bushels per acre. But figure 2 to 2.4 pounds of nitrogen per bushel of wheat, from all sources, most producers aren't going to have enough out there in the field unless they have a lot of carry over. I really think that rates of 90 to 110 pounds per acre are in order. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Early thoughts on prescribed burning for this spring

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I don't mind telling you that this ongoing low precipitation situation is making me nervous. We just haven't gotten much precipitation since early October and the ground was kind of dry then. So then I take that knowledge and go out to the climate prediction center and look at their running three month trends and predictions. From now through October the temperature is all showing average to above average and the precipitation is pretty much equal chances of being below average, average or above average. What I've noticed in the past is that when it says equal chances, it often means a continuation of what we're seeing right now. So what does that mean when it comes to pasture burning this spring? If it were me, I would not be getting too excited about burning. If you have a lot of cedar trees, small cedars and some good fuel, maybe get out there in the next few weeks and burn that pasture. Burning in February and March won't really reduce production that much, if any at all. There's enough moisture to get early season growth started, but after that is what's making me nervous right now. If you have a good reason to burn - brush control, something like that, then burn and maybe get it done as early as possible. If you are just burning to be burning, I might just back off on it this year. I just keep watching the drought monitor index and it just seems to keep settling in a little deeper and a little deeper. Old dry grass might not be the best to eat, but it is something! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

What is our crop rotation gaining us or costing us?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I touched on the topic of thinking outside the box with ag production last week and a conversation with a producer has prompted me to continue that discussion. 35 years ago we grew more wheat than all the other crops combined. Then we got into this mode of starting to switch around and now we are back to moving into the corn belt model of a corn soybean rotation. Which to my thinking isn't really a rotation at all.

Monocultures are when all an area grows is one crop. We aren't quite there, we're more of a bi-culture. Regardless of whether it is one or two crops in the principle rotation, it creates all sorts of problems. Remember when we were really just starting to increase soybean and corn acres?

We didn't worry about too many insects or diseases. But the more of anything that a single farmer, a community or a region grows, the more problems you'll start to see popping up.

Diversity provides many benefits to the crops we are trying to grow, to the wildlife in an area, it's just a healthier ecosystem. We tend to get caught up in the mass production model of agriculture and forget to stop and take time to think if there isn't another way to do something.

Or something else that we could be growing. Is it oats, barley, cover crops? Is it a small scale vegetable production just for something different. It's scary to think of doing something

different. But, if we always do what we've always done, we'll always get what we've always

got. Is that what you want? This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Pasture Leases

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'm not going to talk about what pastures should be leasing for today - I may do that in a few more weeks, but I do want to talk about all the things that I think should be in a pasture lease. Pasture leases really need to be in writing. If, as a landowner, you want a leg to stand on when it comes to in dates, out dates, stocking rates and terms of the lease, it must be in writing. In the eyes of the law, without a written lease, the tenant has the property from March 1 to March 1. Pasture leases need to include in date, out date and any grace period or penalties if they are late getting out. By the way, cattle staying late in the fall aren't what damage the pasture - pastures are damaged by the stocking rates in July, August and September. By October 1, what's done is done. They can graze it to the ground and it won't do any more or less damage. They may remove fuel for burning for the next year, but it won't hurt the grass condition. I like to have a date when they will be out, then a two week grace period with approval because of weather, and then a penalty. Who repairs fence and who replaces fence? Outline who provides materials and who provides labor. Outline who is going to control noxious weeds and if there is brush to be controlled who does it. If the landlord is providing herbicide, it needs to say so. If the landlord is providing any kind of service such as counting head, checking mineral, etc. say exactly what and how often. You don't want to leave anything to chance or assumption. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Custom Rates

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The Kansas Ag Statistics Service used to do a survey annually of what farmers were charging or paying for custom farming operations. It was a valuable bulletin and right after the Bluestem Pasture Survey it was the most popular bulletin that we supplied. Well, guess what two bulletins got slashed by budget cuts. Yup. Custom rates and bluestem pasture report. The Ag Econ Department at K-State tries to replace it with calculated values that are based on a bunch of formulas that are based on the last actual survey now 5 years old. It's okay but not as good as an actual survey. Iowa State University does still do an actual survey annually. When I compare the rates in K-States calculated against Iowa State's actual survey you do find some differences and I think quite a bit of that difference is going to be the middle of the corn belt versus the diversification of Kansas crop production. But I think that if you look at both of them and so some thinking, you can come up with a ball park to start working from. The K-State rates for 2018 are already out - as in JUST out as of the middle of last week. You can find it on the AgManager.info website. The Iowa Survey won't be out until sometime next month and I will have it available when it is finally posted on line. Custom rates are a tricky thing because everyone does things differently. If you call and ask for a custom rate now days I give you a range and a few things to consider. I used to be able to to give you a solid figure and know that it was close to where you should be. So bear with me and together we can find you an answer! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.