

Starlings

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I've had several calls this winter asking about the flocks of starlings that are around, especially around cattle feeding areas. Starlings form large groups in the winter and once they set up wintering areas they can form large flocks that create a mess, eat livestock feed and just basically are a nuisance. At this time of year there is no easy fix to the problem. We are getting near the start of their nesting season and the flocks will soon start to break up as pairs head off to nest. The true starling, with its speckled breast, long bill and short tail, is not native and is not protected by any laws. But they can hang out in mixed flocks with true blackbirds that are protected. There are some things to reduce issues with starlings, which are going to be most successful when started in the fall. Contact me for more information on starling control. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Keeping calves healthy during calving, part 1

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. This may be one of the roughest winters for cattle herds that I can remember in my time here. The stress is there every single day and undoubtedly the biggest challenge is the wet and muddy conditions. The Beef Cattle Institute at K-State has several recommendations on keeping calves healthy especially when it comes to preventing and managing scours. Every cattle producer knows these but a reminder of the basics is never a bad idea. The first step is to identify sick calves as soon as possible. We want to avoid the typhoid Mary syndrome and keep sick calves away from other calves and get them healthy as quickly as possible treating with appropriate fluids. Another important step is to keep the feed going to the cows. Cows in good body condition provide the most colostrum. More tips tomorrow. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Keeping calves healthy during calving, part 2

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Continuing on yesterday's topic of preventing and managing calf scours. Try to utilize more pasture areas. Separate older calves from younger calves. Calves under three weeks in age are at the greatest risk of scours. By six to eight weeks of age they are fairly resistant. Using several nursery pastures as you go through the season will not only keep different age groups segregated but it'll provide more dry grass and less mud. If necessary, move feeders around to move cows out of muddy areas. Okay, we may not have enough pasture this year to do that, but do the best you can. In extreme cases, cows that haven't calved are moved to a new pasture every week. This keeps the calving cows on less muddy areas and keeps same age calves together. Once we've gotten through this, the different groups can be recombined. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Palmer Amaranth resistance to Dicamba and 2,4-D

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Just when you wonder if it can get any worse, when it comes to weed control, it does. Two news items this past week caught my eye. The first was a report that waterhemp is starting to challenge Palmer amaranth as the toughest weed challenge and then the news that K-State had confirmed resistance in Palmer amaranth to 2,4-D and dicamba. Great - just the kind of news we wanted to hear. We already knew that Palmer amaranth had developed resistance to group 2, 5, 9 and 27 herbicides, so let's just add group 4 to the mix. The plants with resistance were from long term no-till plots on a KSU research farm and very isolated, but it just shows that resistance can happen to any herbicide. It also points out the importance of using soil residual herbicides with multiple modes of action to reduce the risk of more resistance developing. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Soybean and Sorghum variety performance booklets

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Just about the last variety performance testing booklets of the year are finally out. The Soybean and Grain Sorghum Performance test bulletins are finally done. Yeah, I know, you've already got your seed ordered and booked. Even if you have already ordered all your seed, there's quite a bit of information in these booklets that can help you evaluate your planted cultivars against others that are out there. Yes, a lot of the popular numbers aren't included in the variety tests which is unfortunate. That's because the companies don't want to pay the fees to have them included. Remember that these performance tests have to raise their own funds through the fees. Talk to your seed dealer about that though as these are replicated standardized tests that have a lot of value. In the meantime, pick up your copies soon or find them online! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.