

Smoke Management Plan

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You might think that there'd be no connection between prescribed pasture burning and Covid-19. But there is. Covid-19 is a respiratory disease. Those severely impacted even moderately impacted have issues with breathing. Smoke in the air can make people have problems breathing. Because of that, KDHE and the department of ag have asked land managers to reduce the amount of prescribed burning you do this year. If you do need to burn, feel that you have to burn, please take the time to go to ksfire.org to see how smoke from your fire might impact large urban areas like Wichita, Topeka and Kansas City where they have far more people hospitalized. These folks are in the fight for their lives and excessive smoke in the atmosphere is going to make it worse. Please don't burn on those days for those victims sake. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Watch those Nitrates

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I want to encourage all cattle producers to be careful as you use up some of that sudangrass and forage sorghum from last year. I've had numerous samples that have been sent in for testing for nitrates. Most of it has been coming back at safe levels but every once in a while. We ran one sample in March that came back at over 13,000 ppm. Levels start to become concerning at about 4500 and levels that high can certainly be lethal. Sure enough, a dead cow led the producer to test the rest of that cutting and we appear to have found the culprit. The soils lab is still running full steam at K-State, they're an essential service, thank goodness. We can get results back in usually about 24 hours. Call and we'll leave a probe outside the office door for you and you can bring the sample back and we'll get quick turn around on it! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Alfalfa Weevil

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I finally got out on a couple of those nice days early last week to start checking alfalfa fields. I stopped in an established field and a field that was planted new last fall. The alfalfa looked great in both of them. In checking the growing degree days I knew that we should be having some weevil hatching and likely no larger than 1st instar larvae, which are pretty darn small. Sure enough, in the field of established alfalfa nearly every stem had weevil activity and tiny little shothole feeding that we expect from first instar weevil larvae. We're quite a ways from needing to worry about spraying yet but just so you know that they are out there. The new alfalfa field did not have any weevil in it which is also what I'd expect. There'll likely be spring laid eggs in time but no weevil yet. There were aphids however but nothing to worry about, yet. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Phosphorus Fertilization Rates

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Phosphorus is the most commonly needed fertilizer in our region, right behind nitrogen. Unlike nitrogen and even potassium, phosphorus can be a real pain to get into the plant. Nitrogen is very mobile and even a little rain carries it into the soil. Phosphorus does not readily move into the soil which leaves us the choice of applying a lot of it on the surface so the few surface roots there can grab it, applying it and incorporating it into the top 3 to 6 inches, or applying it with the planter so it's right there in the seedling root zone. Fortunately, phosphorus, unlike nitrogen or potassium is NOT salt based so you can put it in direct seed contact without concern over causing seedling injury. If you're applying starter that does have nitrogen also, be careful not to apply more than 10 lbs per acre combined nitrogen and potassium. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Potassium Fertilization

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In our region potassium is the often forgotten macronutrient mainly because our soils are generally abundant with potassium. It's the third number in the row of numbers on fertilizer bags. It's a macro-nutrient because the levels of it that crops need is large. It's also a very confusing element because we are still learning so much about it. In general, our soils have plenty of potassium. I went back and looked at the soil tests over the past 6 months. The range was 174 to 520 ppm. The average was 348 ppm. There was only one below 200. Even on high yield irrigated corn we don't start recommending potassium until levels get down to 125 ppm or below. So when you get soil test results back calling for large amounts of potassium, those are soil build rates and in tight times, you likely don't need it. Ask me first! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.