

Woody Encroachment of Grasslands

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We have a problem in the grasslands of North America. It's called woody species encroachment. In this country that's cedar trees, sure, but it's also sumac, and dogwood. This didn't happen overnight and it isn't going to be fixed overnight. But there's a phrase that says "if you want to get out of a rut, the first step is to stop digging it deeper." If you feel like you've been spending a lot of time on it and not gaining ground, well then we probably need to try something else. Maybe we burn at a different time. Maybe we start targeting our brush and tree control with different herbicides and different times. Instead of using a one size fits all approach, we select one species to hit hardest and use the best herbicide at the best time. This woody encroachment has been happening for 50 years, trust me, we won't fix it in one or two years! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Brome and Hay Leases

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the things that both tenants and landlords seem to struggle with is figuring out brome or hay leases, especially when they are doing it on shares. Trust me, unless the landlord has the need of some hay, it's easier to do these as a cash lease. If you want to handle these as crop shares leases then we need to figure out the cost of the fertilizer and whether it's shared or all paid by one party. Then figure out the value of the baling operation - for reference the most current custom rates are at about \$21 per bale - but that'll be updated later this spring. Then figure out the value of the hay. If the landlord wants some hay, is it left in the field or does the tenant haul it somewhere else. If hauling is involved, we need to put a value on that too. We can come up with some equitable leases, but it may take some time and some head scratching! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Make Pasture Management Plans Now

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Well, no surprise to anyone most of our area is in D0 or D1 stage drought - abnormally dry to moderate drought. In fact, only 10% of the state isn't in some stage of drought. Right now the 1 month and 3 month outlooks aren't looking so very promising either. Most of our region is also showing dry soils as in under 70% soil saturation, with a lot of the area under 60%. Which isn't boding well for pastures this summer. One wet month can fix that - but I don't see a wet month in the near future. What I'm getting at is we likely will not have normal grass growth in pastures this spring. Now is the time to be thinking seriously about stocking rates for the start of the season and then establishing a plan that, if things haven't improved by mid July, describes how you handle de-stocking. Not things we want to deal with, but get a plan made! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

High Yield Crops

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I periodically visit with producers about competing in crop yield contests. And I've had the privilege of certifying some really amazing yields. But invariably they are disappointed because they can't match the yields out of the corn belt. Okay folks, let's face it - this isn't the corn belt. To be right honest, 300 bushel corn or higher may not be possible, not today anyway. Our soils are different, our climate is different, not just in rainfall but in solar radiation, humidity, wind speed, and all of these things impact crop yield. Now don't get me wrong, 250, 275 even 290 bushel corn is really good corn. And we can probably tweak it a little higher. But look long and hard at the price of fertilizer this year before you submit that entry form. I'm willing to help you as far as I can, but please remember to put things into perspective! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Spend Some Money, Save Some Money

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I recently had a producer bring in soil samples from every crop field he has. Every. Field. Yes, the bill for that little exercise was over \$300. Which may sound like a lot for soil tests. But this is a producer who has routinely been very faithful about applying starter fertilizer to fields over the years. And the soil test showed it. This batch of soil tests, over 20 in all, had phosphorus levels ranging from 43 to 126 ppm. None of these fields require any phosphorus fertilizer this year. If you were even to apply 50 pounds of 11-52-0, the cost of just 20 acres of starter would be more than was spent on these soil tests. On the other hand, if these soil test levels would have been under 20 ppm and the producer didn't apply phosphorus, the crop production would be sub par. This is definitely the year to be soil testing each and every field! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.