



Flint Hills Extension District
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 Council Grove, KS 66846
 (620) 767-5136

*Knowledge
for Life*



Upcoming Events

The following are area or Statewide Agriculture, and/or Community Development/4-H events.

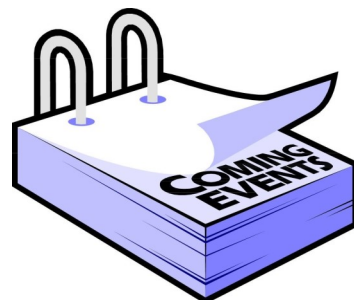
For more information on these events please contact the Extension Office

January

- 1– Happy New Year!
- 6– KSU Calving School– Emporia
- 11– KSU Calving School– Winfield
- 13– KSU Calving School– Blue Rapids
- 14– Deer Management Workshop– Council Grove
- 21– KSU Calving School– Dodge City

February

- 10-12– Women Managing the Farm Conference (Virtual)
- 14– Happy Valentine’s Day!
- 15-20– Kansas Junior Swine Producer Week– Virtual
- 16– Winter Ranch Management– Council Grove
- 21– Morris County 4-H Project Day– Council Grove



Flint Hills District

Agriculture & Community Development

JANUARY 2021

Cattle Chat: Managing Thin Cows in Winter

K-State experts offer advice on optimizing body condition scores in the herd before calving.

MANHATTAN, Kan.– In the midst of the holiday season and the increased access to sweets, many people may be observing a less than ideal change in their personal body conditions.

While people may strive for a skinnier physique, holding a thin body condition over the winter may create deficits for cattle heading into calving season, said the experts at Kansas State University’s Beef Cattle Institute on a recent Cattle Chat podcast.

“Thin cows have a higher maintenance requirement in the winter than cows in adequate condition because they have to work harder to stay warm,” said Bob Weaber, beef cattle specialist and podcast contributor.

To assess the herd, veterinarian Bob Larson suggests ranchers periodically check them and even take pictures of the herd to help monitor changes over time.

“In any group, I expect some variation in the condition, but ideally I want almost all the cows to be in a moderate body condition,” Larson said. “And if they are, then I know that I am managing the group pretty well.”

Larson said if cattle ranchers notice that there are thin cows in the herd, they may need to evaluate the situation further to see if there is a pattern tied to their age or access to feed.

“The number of cows in the herd will creep up if, for example, they are getting pushed out of the feed bunk and not getting the protein supplementation they need,” Larson said.

The experts agree that two feet of bunk space per head is a minimum amount of space needed.

“If you only allocate a foot and a half on a single-sided feed bunk, the big cows will push out the thinner, smaller cows that really need the feed,” Weaber said. He prefers to place the feed bunk in the middle of the pasture so cattle can access the feed from both sides.

Larson added that the amount of bunk space needed will depend on the type of feed provided and how quickly the cattle consume it.

“Big cubes fed on the ground will allow the cattle to have easy access because you can spread it out, but there is more feed waste and sanitation issues that come with that strategy,” veterinarian Brad White said.

Once producers determine why some of the cows are thin, they may need to make culling decisions or form a plan to add condition back on the cows, according to Weaber.

“Identify the commonalities of the problem animals and that will determine the best management strategies to fix it, as well as knowledge for the future,” Weaber said.

White suggested producers look at ways to segregate the thin cows.

“Grouping the thin cows together can be a powerful tool in giving them the extra feed they need ahead of calving season,” White said. The challenge, he added, may lie in where they are located and ease of separating them for feeding.

Larson said it is important to consider where the cow is in the pregnancy when coming up with a supplementation plan.

“Right now, spring calves are midway through their pregnancies and the calves are not pulling that much nutrient demand from them, but as they get closer to calving that demand goes up significantly,” Larson said.

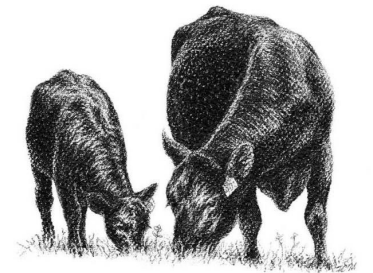
He added: “The cows maintenance cost is the lowest it is going to be right now and that makes it a good time to put some weight on her rather than waiting to do it later.”

Weaber advised producers to calculate the days to calving when figuring out the gain needed.

White gave an example: “If I have 100 days, I could target the cows to gain two pounds per day. That will give them about 200 pounds of gain.”

The bottom line, White said, is to “do the math for your herd and then figure out if it is just a couple individuals that need to gain weight or the entire group, because that answer will drastically change the decision you make and what options are available.”

To hear more of the discussion about managing thin cows, listen in to the Cattle Chat podcast online.



"We can connect ourselves to the farmers, to the land and to our communities. And when we do that, we can change the whole country."
-Dave Matthews

Welcome the New Year!

Happy New Year and welcome to 2021! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season spent around family and friends and just enjoying each others company. It is hard to believe that 2020 has already come to a close. To me, it still feels like I just took on the position of Ag/4-H extension agent when I really have already been here for a year and a half! Time flies when you enjoy what you do.

As we begin a new year, we anticipate the arrival of spring-born calves. But, this means we are also not only checking cows that are calving, but checking to make sure all cows and calves are accounted for.

According to the publication, "Managing Predator Problems: Practices and Procedures for Preventing and Reducing Livestock Losses," most calf predation is done by a few coyotes who learn a killing technique and tend to "specialize". The age of cattle is often related to the severity of a predation problem. First-calf heifers seem to suffer a disproportionately large share of the calf loss to predators. Most calves killed by coyotes are less than one week old.

Pasture selection is one of the practices used to manage predation. According to the article, choice of calving pastures involves weighing predation risks against weather and disease considerations and arriving at an acceptable compromise. Rugged pastures provide good weather protection for cows and calves but are also ideal areas for coyotes. Cow-calf operators need to make the necessary decisions based on past experience and judgments as to the relative severity of predation, disease and weather. Consideration should be given to calving heifers in smaller pastures near the house or ranch headquarters, where they can be kept under closer surveillance.

Best,
Shannon

(Agriculture/4-H Agent)

Stay connected with the Flint Hills District

-Facebook:

K-State Research and Extension-Flint-Hills District

-Website: www.flinthills.ksu.edu

-Mailing list: Call the office to be added (620)767-5136 or email Shannon at spspencer@ksu.edu



January Ag Fact

One acre of soybeans can make 82,368 crayons!



Women Managing the Farm Conference Slated for Feb. 10-12

Manhattan, KAN.- A yearly conference that provides knowledge and support to women in agriculture has announced that its 2021 event will be held online.

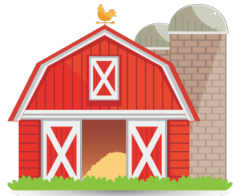
Women Managing the Farm will be held virtually Feb. 10-12. Organizers say the format- like many other events brought about by the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic- will continue to offer a supportive setting for women to develop the skills, resources and knowledge needed for success in the competitive agricultural industry.

Nearly 300 women attended the in-person conference in early 2020. Women Managing the Farm has been held each year since 2005, attracting women farmers, rural business leaders and landowners.

During the upcoming three-day, virtual conference, conference speakers will focus on creating community online and at home by providing attendees with tools that cover such topics as:

- Relationships and health.

- Agricultural and estate law.
- Crop production.
- Marketing.
- Management.



Organizers say a new aspect in 2021 will be a resource library of videos and materials for maintaining a healthy and sustainable home and business life.

Registration and more information is available online, and costs \$50. The conference website also includes information about speakers, programs, exhibitors, and scholarships, or interested persons can call 785-532-2560.

Conference updates also are available on Facebook.

To register for the conference, please visit: <http://womenmanagingthefarm.com>

Mouse Damage to Fruit Trees/Plants

Be on the lookout for mouse tunnels around your fruit plants. Trunks and roots of apple trees are among the favorite meals for mice. There is probably no damage yet. But if we receive enough snow to cover winter food supplies, mice will begin to feed on the lower area of tree trunks and roots. This feeding may be severe enough to girdle tree trunks and kill the trees.

Mice like to hide in dead grass and weeds around the trees, especially close to the trunks. They will often tunnel near the soil surface and feed on the tree bark. You can check for mice by placing baited mouse traps in PVC or other pipe near your trees. Insert the traps far enough so that pets are unable to reach the trap. Check the stations about once a week and reset traps if necessary.

Mouse damage can be severe enough to kill trees that are old enough to bear fruit. Clear dead grass and weeds away from your trees and monitor for mice if you are using mulch around your fruit plants. (Ward Upham)



Winter Deer Management

January 14, 2021
5:00 PM

Council Grove Community Building
612 US-56 Hwy.
Council Grove, KS 66846

Featuring K-State Research and Extension Wildlife Control Specialist Drew Ricketts



Topics Include:

- Deer Biology
- Diseases and Common Sources of Mortality
- Managing Habitat
- Selective Harvest for Management Purposes
- Managing Damage

RSVP Required by January 8th to:

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COVID-19 protocols will be put in place for this program. If you would like to attend this program virtually, please contact the Flint Hills Extension office at: (620) 767-5136.