

River Valley District

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

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Extension District

FARM SERVICE AGENCY DECLARES RECENT WINTER STORMS ELIGIBLE FOR LIVESTOCK INDEMNITY PROGRAM

The recent winter storms and cold weather have been tough for some farmers and their cows that are in the middle of calving. However, cows and their young calves are not the only animals affected by this weather. The USDA Farm Service Agency has recognized this struggle, and they have determined that due to the recent conditions loss of these animals would fall under the Livestock Indemnity Program, or LIP.

The LIP covers livestock owners and contract growers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions, including the recent winter storms that have struck Kansas. Kansas' FSA Committee has established normal mortality for adult beef cow is 1.1% and for non-adult beef cows (less than 400 pounds) is 2.7%. Loss occurred above these amounts would qualify. The most important thing for livestock owners to do is to document their losses. A notification of the losses must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss occurred. Eligible losses are recorded by calendar year (January 1 to December 31). If you have occurred losses above normal mortality, contact your local FSA office and they will be able to answer questions about the LIP. Information can also be found online at www.fsa.usda.gov. For more information you can call Brett Melton, Livestock Agent, in the Concordia Office at 785-243-8185 or email bmelton@ksu.edu.

SPRING FIELDWORK-CONCERNS WITH A WET SPRING

Spring fieldwork, for the 2019 season, will definitely be off to a slow start, following a wet harvest in 2018 and persistent precipitation throughout the winter. As the cold weather continued into the first week of March, many producers in the River Valley Extension District, as well as throughout the State of Kansas, have become concerned about completing their fieldwork in a timely manner. Many producers were not able to apply nitrogen fertilizer (e.g. anhydrous ammonia) punctually last fall and will be bombarded with the application of fertilizer, preemergent weed control, etc. simultaneously over the next few months.

A delay in fieldwork is a cause for concern, but other issues will be evident resulting from the excessive precipitation from the past several months. One of the first concerns is denitrification in waterlogged soils. Denitrification losses usually begin when approximately 60% of the soil pores are completely saturated. With the lack of oxygen inducing "anaerobic" conditions, many microorganisms requiring oxygen begin to find alternative sources for their oxygen. One of the sources includes the plant nutrient, nitrate (NO₃⁻). If the nitrate form of nitrogen fertilizer is used, concerns of leaching and/or denitrification occur.

Another concern, pertaining to soil fertility, is phosphorus runoff. Phosphorus, when in the phosphate (PO₄⁻) form, adheres well to most soils and will move with the soil when the soil erodes. This leads to uneven distribution of phosphate throughout the field, and the potential for runoff into freshwater sources.

In addition to fertilizer concerns with saturated soils comes the concern of timely applications of herbicides. Another component, that helps mitigate weed pressure, is the fall, burn down application of herbicides to control many of our weeds. Without this application, heavier reliance is demanded from our spring application of herbicide treatments (e.g. preemergents and spring, burn down applications). With the continuing wet spring, preemergent herbicides (if applied) will more than likely be initially effective, but if too much precipitation persists after the application, the preemergent herbicides will more than likely be over diluted, drastically reducing their efficacy.

For more information and to address questions, contact Tyler Husa, Crop Production Extension Agent, at 785-243-8185 or by email at thusa@ksu.edu.

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ENOGEN CORN FROM SYNGENTA

Enogen corn from Syngenta first hit the market in 2011. Enogen corn contains an alpha-amylase enzyme. What this enzyme does is breaks down the starch in the corn kernel to glucose molecules. This only happens at a certain temperature when cooked at the ethanol plant. These glucose molecules are what is fermented by yeast to make the ethanol. The reason ethanol plants use Enogen corn is it eliminates the need for a liquid enzyme that must be added otherwise. Since inception, over \$100 million in premiums have been paid out to producers who have planted Enogen corn. There are some hoops to jump through to get the premium, but that is not what I want to talk about. Instead, I want to discuss feeding this new technology to cattle.

Many research trials have been done feeding Enogen corn to cattle. When we feed Enogen corn to finishing cattle as a dry rolled corn, we see an improvement in feed efficiency. Research done at the University of Nebraska shows this improvement in efficiency is due to an increase in starch digestion, specifically in the small intestines. This is where it gets a little complicated. The rumen of the animal is the main site of starch digestion (about 80-85%). The research shows that there is no difference in ruminal digestibility in cattle fed Enogen corn compared to corn without the amylase enzyme. However, once things move to the small intestines there is a different story. Of the 15-20% of the starch that makes it past the rumen, 68% of the starch is digested in Enogen corn and only 51% on corn without the amylase enzyme is digested. To summarize this, total tract digestibility was 90.9% of non-Enogen corn starch and 93.4% of Enogen starch.

Previous Kansas State trials showed that feeding Enogen corn to growing cattle as a dry-rolled or whole-shelled corn will improve feed efficiency 5.5%. Recently, Kansas State has come out with data feeding Enogen corn as a silage to growing cattle. The data show that cattle fed Enogen corn silage had a 4.4% improvement in feed efficiency and 6% improvement in daily gain compared to the non-Enogen silage.

There doesn't seem to be any drawbacks to planting Enogen corn if you know it will be fed to cattle. Yield and cost of seed is similar to other corn varieties. Based on the data, it is safe to say that Enogen corn can improve feed efficiency of growing and finishing cattle. However, there are instances when feeding Enogen corn observed no difference when compared to a control.

NATIONAL SAFE DIGGING MONTH

April is National Safe Digging Month and so we take this time to remind our readers to dial 811 and "Know What's Below" before undertaking any project. The identification of underground utilities is vital for our safety and for the good of all those relying on those utilities. Whether building new fence, planting trees, repairing terraces, or landscaping, know what's below! Call 811 at least 2 full working days to allow for utility locates.



INCUBATING AND HATCHING EGGS

Spring time means the start of many new things. Calves are on the ground, grass is greening up, and birds begin laying eggs. I decided to switch gears a little this month. Below are some frequently asked questions (and answers) from the Kansas State University Animal Science webpage on incubating and hatching eggs.

1. Are there any special instructions for incubating duck and goose eggs?

Duck eggs in large, force-draft incubators should be incubated at 99 1/4 - 99 1/2°F and goose eggs at 99 - 99 1/2°F. The wet bulb reading during the incubation period should be 86 - 88° and 92°F at hatching time. These high humidity requirements eliminate the possibility of satisfactory results if waterfowl eggs are set in a large incubator with chicken eggs.

To increase humidity the eggs should be sprinkled with lukewarm water twice weekly up to the 25th day, then discontinued until the eggs start to pip. The addition of too much water during incubation will increase the number of eggs that rot in the incubator.

In small still-air incubators the temperature should be 100 1/4, 101 1/2, 102 1/2 and 103°F, respectively, for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th weeks of incubation.

The eggs should be turned at least three times a day. Goose eggs should be turned through an angle of 180 degrees.

2. How can you check relative humidity in an incubator?

The wet-bulb temperature is based on the rate of evaporation of moisture from a wet surface. To determine this, take a thermometer that registers between 80 and 100° F and cover the bulb with a piece of cloth. Dip the bulb in water and place it in the incubator level with the eggs. Watch the temperature until it stabilizes and take the reading. This is the wet-bulb temperature. The lower the wet-bulb reading the lower the percent relative humidity and vice versa. Ref. E. Incubation – "Incubating Chickens", for recommended levels of humidity for incubating eggs.

3. Where can I get plans and parts for the construction and operation of a small incubator?

Ref. A. General Information – "[Information About Supplies of Stocks and Equipment for Small Flocks](#)" for equipment; Incubation Series - Unit 2 "Construction of a Small Incubator" for plans; Unit 3 "Incubating Chicken Eggs" for instructions on how to operate a small incubator.

4. How can you sex day-old chicks?

The most common method of sexing day-old chicks is by the Japanese or vent sexing method. This method involves visual examination of the rudimentary copulatory organ on the top wall of the vent. Structural differences exist between the male and female. Accuracy with this method requires much training and good eyesight. A second method is visual observation of the immature gonads by the use of an optical device, which is inserted into the intestine of the chick. The female has one and the male two gonads. A third method is autosexing, which uses visual differences in the appearance of the day-old chicks to different sex. Examples are feather color and rate of feathering. The latter method is limited to phenotypic (visual) traits, which are carried on the sex chromosome. Another option is feather sexing, but not all breeds can be separated by sex or by observing the length of the primary and secondary feathers of a day-old chick.

5. Can an unfertilized egg show development?

Parthenogenesis, the development of unfertilized eggs, occasionally occurs in turkeys. Most of the embryos die prior to hatching. Those that hatch are sterile.

6. How long can hatching eggs be stored before they are incubated?

A rule of thumb is for each day eggs are held over 4 days, hatchability will drop 3-4% and hatching time will be delayed 30 minutes. Hatchability of eggs stored for long periods (over 7 days) can be improved by storing the eggs at 65° F in air tight plastic bags and turning the eggs once a day. Turning consists of placing one end of the case on a 2-3 inch board or brick one day, and the other end the next.

7. How long does it take chicks to hatch after they start to pip?

Although there is individual variation, approximately 80% of the chicks will hatch within 15 hours after the first chick hatches (slightly less for waterfowl). A hatch should be completed within 24 hours. Hold eggs that have not hatched by this time to your ear. You can assume the egg will not hatch if you do not hear movement. Better yet, candle them to determine their progress.

Smaller eggs in a lot hatch faster than the larger eggs. White Leghorn eggs hatch sooner than eggs from heavy breeds. The longer eggs are held prior to incubation, the slower they hatch.

8. Should I help late hatching chicks out of the shells?

No, because chicks that hatch late are usually weak and/or deformed.

9. Does placing eggs on their side in the incubator reduce hatchability?

No, this is the normal position under a setting hen. Don't set eggs large end down.

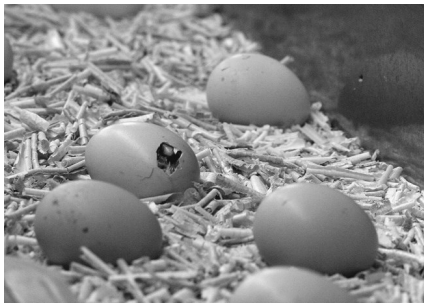
10. What should I do to the incubator if the power goes off for several hours?

Keep the eggs as warm as possible. Don't seal the incubator to conserve heat; the embryos need oxygen.

11. Should I open the incubator to check on the progress of the hatch?

No, opening the incubator lowers the temperature and humidity which delays hatching and may lower hatchability. Be patient, wait until most of the chicks are hatched and dried off before opening the incubator.

If you have any other questions about incubating and hatching eggs, stop by the Concordia office, give me a call at 785-243-8185, or email me at bmelton@ksu.edu.



BUTTERFLY GARDENING

Butterfly gardening is becoming more and more popular. Providing for the basic needs of butterflies, such as food, shelter, and liquids, will encourage butterflies to visit your area. When planning your landscape, there are a number of plants you could put in your beds that will attract butterflies. However, different species of butterflies prefer different plants. Using a variety of plant material that vary in blooming times of day and year helps attract a diverse group of visitors.

Plant groups of the same plant together, as a group is easier for butterflies to find. A single plant is difficult for a butterfly to detect. If trying to attract a certain species of butterfly, learn which plant(s) that butterfly prefers, and then emphasize that plant in your landscape.

Annuals that attract butterflies include ageratum, cosmos, French marigold, petunia, verbena, and zinnia.

Perennials and shrubs can be split into those that bloom early, mid-season, and late. Good choices for those that bloom early are allium, chives, forget-me-not, and lilac. Bee balm, butterfly bush, black-eyed Susan, buttonbush, butterfly weed, daisy, daylily, gaillardia, lavender, lily, mint, phlox, privet, sunflower, and veronica are fitting picks for mid-season bloom. Late bloomers include aster, glossy abelia, and sedum.

There are other things you can do to encourage butterflies. Butterflies are cold-blooded and like open areas where they can sun themselves on cool days and shade to cool off when the sun is too intense. Butterflies also need water. A simple way to make a butterfly pool is to take a bucket, fill it with gravel, and bury it to the rim. Now add water, sugar water or sweet drinks so that the butterflies can land on the gravel but still reach the liquid.

For questions or information contact Kelsey Hatesohl in Washington or email khatesohl@ksu.edu.

PLANTING TOMATOES TOO EARLY

Spring might feel like it's here, but when planting your garden you need to be sure the soil has warmed up enough to plant. Gardeners often try to get a jump on the season by planting tomatoes as early as possible. Though this can be successful at times, there are certain precautions that should be taken, especially with the up and down temperatures we have been having this year.

The first precaution that should be taken is checking to make sure the soil is at an adequate temperature. Tomato roots do not do well until soil temperatures reach a consistent 55°F. Use a soil thermometer to check the temperature at 2 inches deep during the late morning to get a good average temperature for the day. This should be done for three or four days to get an average temperature for the week. To warm your soil up quicker try putting down black plastic mulch. This plastic mulch should warm up your soil enough for you to get that early jump on planting your tomatoes.

The second precaution that should be taken is to harden off plants that you are transplanting into your garden. Plants moved directly from a warm, moist greenhouse to the more exposed and cooler conditions outside may undergo transplant shock. Transplant shock causes plants to stop growing until they are acclimated to the weather. Plants can be acclimated to outside conditions by placing them outdoors in a location protected from wind and full sunlight for a few days before transplanting. The best conditions for transplanting is an overcast, windless day; well as close to a windless day as we can get in Kansas.

The third precaution that should be taken is to protect your tomatoes from frost. Tomatoes cannot tolerate frost. Watch the weather and cover the plants if frost is predicted. A floating row cover or light sheets can be used for protection. A floating row cover can be left on the plants for two to three weeks to increase the rate of growth and establishment.

Here are a few other tips for getting your tomato plants off to a fast start. Use smaller stockier plants rather than tall spindly ones. The smaller plants tend to form roots and become established faster than the tall overgrown plants. Don't mulch your plants as soon as you plant them; give them time to start growing well, then mulch. By mulching too early, it will prevent the soil from warming up, and slowing down the growth of the tomato plants. I hope these tips will help you have a successful tomato crop.

PROPER TIMING FOR CRABGRASS PREVENTERS

As the weather starts to warm up, it is time to think about preparing your lawn for the summer months. Did you have a problem with crabgrass last year? If so, it's time to put down a crabgrass preventer. Crabgrass preventer is another name for preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. Preemergence herbicides do not kill the weed seed. However, they do kill the young plant after it germinates. Therefore, they do not prevent germination but prevent the plant from emerging. Crabgrass preventers are just that-preventers. With a few exceptions, they have no effect on existing crabgrass plants. Therefore, preventers must be applied before germination.

Additionally, preventers do not last forever once they are applied. Microorganisms and natural processes begin to gradually break down the herbicide soon after it is applied. If some products are applied too early, they may have lost their strength by the time they are needed. Most crabgrass preventers are ineffective after about 60 days, but there is considerable variation among products.

For most of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around May 1 or a little later depending on the spring weather patterns. April 15 is normally a good target date for applying preventer because it gives active ingredients time to disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. An even better way to tell when it's time to apply your preventer is with the bloom of ornamental plants. The Eastern Redbud tree is a good choice for this purpose. When the trees in your area approach full bloom, apply crabgrass preventer. Depending on what chemical you decide to put down you may have to do a follow-up application. Products that do require a follow-up application about 8 weeks later include Pendimethalin (Scotts Halts) and Team (Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control). If you are using Dimension or Barricade, a follow-up will not be needed.

Dimension and Barricade are the only two products that give season-long control of crabgrass from a single application. In fact, they can be applied much earlier than April 15 and still have sufficient residual strength to last the season. Barricade can even be applied in the fall for crabgrass control the next season.

Dimension can be applied as early as March 1. Because of the added flexibility in timing, these products are favorites of lawn care companies who have many customers to service in the spring. Though Dimension is usually not applied as early as Barricade, it is the best choice if it must be applied later than recommended. It is the exception to the rule that preemergence herbicides do not kill existing weeds. Dimension can kill crabgrass as long as it is young (two-to-three-leaf stage).

Dimension is also the best choice if treating a lawn that was planted late last fall. Normally a preemergence herbicide is not recommended unless the lawn has been mowed two to four times, but Dimension is kind to young tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass seedlings. However, read the label of the specific product you wish to use to ensure you are applying it correctly.

Note that products containing Dimension and Barricade may use the common name rather than the trade name. The common chemical name for Dimension is dithiopyr and for Barricade is prodiamine. Remember, when using any pesticide, read the label and follow instructions carefully. It is recommended to apply crabgrass preventers before fertilizer so the grass isn't encouraged to put on too much growth too early.

HAZARDOUS OCCUPATIONS TRAINING

Federal Law requires youth ages 14 and 15 to participate in a Hazardous Occupations Training and become certified in order to work for hire for anyone other than their parents. Youth ***must pass*** a safe tractor and machinery operation program to be certified. To meet this requirement, the River Valley District will be conducting the Hazardous Occupations Training/ tractor and machinery safety training. The training provides trainees with knowledge of tractor, machinery, and other farm hazards to reduce the farm accident rate. It also provides sufficient information to pass a written examination and an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to pass a safe tractor driving examination. The training will be held on Saturday, May 11, 2019 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm at PrairieLand Partners (formerly CTI), 1441 Union Road in Concordia. Youth must pre-register beforehand: to preregister for the May 11, 2019 training contact any River Valley District Extension office by Monday, April 29, 2019. Cost of the course is \$20 and includes materials and refreshments. Youth must bring a sack lunch. You ***must*** provide *name, address, date of birth, and contact information*; as well as pay the fee at registration time. Youth ***must complete assignments before coming to class, attend the entire day, and then complete a driving requirement*** in order to ***receive certification***. Alternative tractor safety trainings in Kansas can be found listed on this site: <http://www.bae.ksu.edu/extension/fs/khot/> Contact Tyler Husa in the Concordia office with any questions.

Osteoporosis: How Much do you know?

What is it all about? Be aware of steps that can be taken to prevent osteoporosis from taking a bite out of the years of our lives.

Learn about bone strengthening strategies.

Tuesday, April 9th– 2pm at Belleville Public Library, 1327 19th Street

You are welcome to attend this informational gathering.

Sonia Cooper, River Valley Extension Agent, Nutrition, Food Safety and Health will be presenting the program. Plan to attend.

GARY & BECKY HATESOHL MASTER FARM FAMILY CLASS OF 2018



Five couples were honored March 8 in Manhattan as the 2018 class of Kansas Master Farmers and Master Farm Homemakers in recognition of their leadership in agriculture, environmental stewardship and service to their communities. The River Valley Extension District nominated Gary and Becky Hatesohl from Greenleaf and they were selected in the

Kansas Master Farm Family Class of 2018 along with four other couples from throughout Kansas. The statewide award program is in its 92nd year and is sponsored by K-State Research and Extension and Kansas Farmer magazine. Below is their profile for the award. Congratulations to Gary & Becky!

After graduating from Washington High School, Gary Hatesohl focused on production agriculture and carpentry at North Central Kansas Technical College in Beloit.

Since 1982, Gary has volunteered at the Greenleaf Fire Department. He has been president of the Washington County Fair Board. Also, he is a lifelong member of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, where he has been the youth group leader, congregation chairman, and church elder. In the River Valley Extension District, Gary has served as a board member.

Gary and his wife, Rebecca, were active members of 4-H and FFA. As alumni they still continue to donate their time by chaperoning trips, organizing livestock clinics and judging contests, and helping at the Washington County Fair. Their efforts earned Rebecca the Outstanding Washington County Alumni Award and gave Gary the chance to serve as president of the Kansas FFA Alumni Board.

Rebecca graduated from Washburn University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She taught elementary school for 31 years and retired in 2014. As a teacher, she served as a district trainer and a member of the school district's professional development team. Five different years she was nominated for Who's Who Among America's Teachers. Rebecca also chaperoned students to the National FBLA Convention in Georgia.

The Hatesohls' farming operation consists of cropland and beef cattle production. Water quality is an important variable on their farm. They use terraces, waterways, and soil sampling to continually monitor water quality. Gary and Rebecca attend informational meetings held by K-State Research and Extension and seed companies to better understand technology and farming management.

Son, Adam graduated from Kansas State University in 2009 with a doctorate from the College of Veterinary Medicine. He and his wife, Lindsey, have two children, Noah and Natalie.

Daughter, Kelsey graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in horticulture and landscape design. She has worked for the River Valley Extension District as a horticulture agent for the past two years.

COW-CALF PRODUCER TIPS FOR BACK TO GRASS & BREEDING

Dale Blasi, Extension Beef Specialist offers producers the following tips for the back to grass and breeding season of mid-April through June.

*Supplement/feed cows to maintain or improve body condition prior to the breeding season. Cows should be in moderate body condition by the start of the season to maximize fertility.

*For thin, young cows, consider feeding fat to improve re-breeding rates. Research indicates that when feeding about 0.4 lb. per head per day of a plant source (soybean, sunflower, safflower oils), fat can increase first-service conception and pregnancy rates (0% to 15%). Feeding fat can be effective both before and after calving. Consult your nutritionist.

*Mineral supplementation should include greater levels of magnesium (intake should be between 15 to 30 grams (g) per head per day, or at least 11% of the mineral mix) for grass tetany prevention.

*Plan your breeding season, both AI and natural service. Make sure all supplies and semen are on hand prior to the breeding season. Breeding for 65 days should be long enough; less than 90 days is a key sign of good management.

*Consider using estrus synchronization and AI. Several synchronization systems to overcome anestrus are available. Selection depends on labor, facility, and implementation costs. Consider the following: age group of females (yearling replacement heifers vs. cows), commitment of time and efforts for heat detection, potential number of females that are anestrus (days postpartum, body condition, calving difficulty), labor availability, and the return on investment for total commitment to the breeding program. Consider breeding heifers three weeks prior to the mature cow herd to give them a greater chance to rebreed.

*Handle semen properly and use correct AI techniques to maximize fertility.

*Bulls should be in good body condition prior to the breeding season. Thin bulls can run out of stamina. Breeding soundness examinations are recommended for all bulls prior to turnout! For natural-service programs assign yearling bulls to 10-15 cows, 2 and 3-year-old bulls to 20-25 cows, and older bulls to 25-40 cows. Some suggest the service capacity of a bull less than 24 months is equal to his age in months at turn out.

*Natural service bull should have body condition, eyes, feet, legs, and reproductive parts closely monitored during the breeding season.

*Begin your calf preconditioning program. Vaccination, castration and parasite control at a young age will decrease stress at weaning time. This is a time to add value to the calf crop.

*Implanting calves older than 60 days of age will increase weaning weight.

*Properly identify all cows and calves. Establish premises numbers for compliance with state and national programs.

*Maintain records that will verify calving season, health programs, and management practices.

*Good fences make good neighbors. Replace or check and repair fences for summer pastures. Check equipment (sprayers, dust bags, oilers,) and repair or replace as needed. Check water supply (tanks, wells, pumps, etc.)

Adult Mental Health First Aid Training

Friday, April 26

Clay Center

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

OR

Thursday, June 20

Washington

FNB Meeting Room

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Cost:

\$15 Payable Upon Registration



Lunch Provided

*Please let us know in advance if you have dietary restrictions.

To register send your name, address & phone number along with \$15 registration fee payable to the River Valley Extension District. Please mail registration to the follow offices:

Clay Center Workshop:

River Valley Extension District, 322 Grant Avenue,
Clay Center, Ks. 67432
785-632-5335

Washington Workshop:

River Valley Extension District, Courthouse,
214 C Street, Washington, Ks. 66968
785-325-2121

Registration is on a first come first serve basis for a maximum of 25 participants at each location. Register TODAY!

For questions contact:

Sonia Cooper at 785-325-2121 or srcooper@ksu.edu

Deanna Turner at 785-632-5335 or dtturner@ksu.edu

Mental Health First Aid teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. This 8-hour training gives you the skills needed to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to appropriate care.

Program will be presented by Pawnee Mental Health Services.

The Adult Mental Health First Aid training is provided by a Culture of Health Grant, K-State Research & Extension River Valley District.



Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact John Forshee, Director, River Valley Extension District #4, 322 Grant Avenue, Clay Center, KS 67432. Phone 785-632-5335

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FARM STRESS SUMMIT- “SHEDDING SOME LIGHT ON A DARK SUBJECT”

Sonia Cooper and John Forshee had an excellent contribution to the March 2019 Edition of the River Valley District’s Extension Newsletter with “Farm Financial Crisis Affects on Mental Health.” They informed us on how stress affects the body: physically, emotionally, as well as socially. We are going to dive into why we, in the River Valley District, sought the opportunity to attend the Farm Stress Summit at Michigan State University in Lansing, Michigan this January. With many of us coming from farming backgrounds ourselves, we see the need to be proactive in our approach to keep our rural communities and farms thriving during these more difficult times. If we take a look back to the 1980’s Farm Crisis, we can see how extremely difficult times in agriculture affect not only farmers themselves, but the communities, neighbors, families, children, and professionals who work with our producers on a daily basis. Farmers hold onto the land, because it not only involves their income, but is a way of living that was established from an early age. “The land means everything to farmers...losing the family farm is the ultimate loss...” (Rosmann, 2008, p. 39). This is witnessed and explained in the “Agrarian Imperative: ‘...this genetically programmed instinct impels farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to endure unusual pain and hardship, and to take uncommon risks”” (Rosmann, 2008, p. 72).

With that being said, we recognize we cannot reach all of the producers, in the state of Kansas, who are enduring extreme amounts of stress. However, we understand we can reach a vast majority of our producers by educating and informing the families, agriculture professionals, and businesses that work with our producers. With the curriculum ascertained and adapted from Michigan State University to fit Kansas, our team, in the River Valley District, is preparing to help as many folks, involved in agriculture, as possible.

References:

Rosmann, M. R. (2008). Behavioral healthcare of the agriculture population: A brief history. *Journal of Rural Mental Health*, 32 (1), 39-48.

Rosmann, M. R. (2010). The agrarian imperative. *Journal of Agromedicine*, 15, 71-75.

MEDICARE EXTRA HELP - THE FARMER ASSET ISSUE

Deanna often gets questions on Medicare Extra Help for farmers. Farmers may qualify on the income requirements: a maximum of \$2,134 monthly income for a married couple before they deduct your Medicare Part B premium which usually is \$135.50 per person. Often, however, a farmer’s assets with the farm land disqualify them from meeting the maximum asset limit of \$25,720 which is in checking, savings and certificates of deposit. Resources do not include a person’s primary residence and vehicle. The value of farm land is included in the assets for farmers and therefore likely makes them ineligible for Medicare Extra Help.

FARM STRESS: UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION & SUICIDE

Stress can influence a person physically, emotionally, or mentally due to existing pressures or concerns. In our rural communities there has been considerable stress over the past months due to adverse weather conditions, low commodity prices and other forces that are beyond our individual control. For some individuals, stress may lead to depression and can be more difficult to cope with when stress factors compound.

As we work to address this issue, it is important for us to look at who might be at risk of stress related depression. Those at the greatest risk are rural community members who:

- *are socially withdrawn or isolated from others
- *are economically troubled or overwhelmed
- *have limited connection with a support group (family, etc.)
- *have experienced a recent loss (job, farm, death, divorce)
- *have been ill or have a progressive or chronic illness,
- *have personal or family history of anxiety or depression.

The risk factors for depression include a personal history of: chronic medical illness, chronic pain, loss of physical functioning, prior depressive episodes, reliving bad experiences, recent significant loss, or multiple recent stressors. Farmers often work alone and so social isolation can become significant for farmers or farm families who do not make a point to find social interaction. Members of families with a history of recurrent depression, mental health issues, or alcohol/drug abuse or dependence are also at greater risk for depression.

Research has consistently shown that there is a strong link between depression and suicide. The numbers would also tell us that individuals living in rural areas have higher rates of suicide than other groups. Among those living in rural areas, men working in agriculture are higher risk for suicide when they experience depression. If we look at the numbers more closely, we see that the suicide rate for rural men over 50 years-of-age is significantly pronounced.

Suicidal behavior in rural men may be a reaction or perceived loss of social status and/or control. Individuals who are self-medicating with alcohol or drugs (OTC, Prescription, Illegal) may experience lowered impulse control and this can increase the risk of suicidal thoughts or feelings.

Identifying a person at risk of suicide can be difficult, even for a trained professional. There are, however, some common signs that we can watch for such as:

- *severe feelings of anxiety, depression, or hopelessness
- *withdrawal from people or activities they ordinarily participated in and enjoyed
- *frequent talk about death or disappearing
- *strong feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, negative thoughts
- *decline in normal hygiene or appearance
- *increased alcohol, pain medication, drug use or misuse
- *stockpiling of medication
- *easy access to firearms
- *giving treasured items away and putting their house in order.

It is OK to ask someone if they are thinking of suicide. If they are, stay with them and call for help. Help may be at the emergency room, a call to 911, or at a call to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK.

River Valley Extension DistrictWashington Office
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"2019 UP-COMING MEETINGS & EVENTS"**

DATE	TIME	PROGRAM	LOCATION
Mar.17-May11		Walk Kansas	State Wide Program
Mar.26-May 16	10-11am	Stay Strong Stay Healthy (Tuesdays & Thursdays)	Washington-Good Shepherd Lutheran Parish Hall
Apr. 3	10am	Enjoying Life in Retirement	Washington-Extension Meeting Room
Apr. 3	2pm	Enjoying Life in Retirement	Belleville-Extension Meeting Room
Apr. 5	10am	Enjoying Life in Retirement	Concordia-Extension Meeting Room
Apr. 5	2pm	Enjoying Life in Retirement	Clay Center-Extension Meeting Room
Apr. 9	2pm	Osteoporosis: How Much Do You Know?	Belleville-Public Library-1327 19th St.
Apr. 26	8:30-5:00pm	Adult Mental Health First Aid Training	Clay Center-St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Apr. 30	7:00 pm	Container Gardening	Belleville-Public Library-1327 19th St.
May 11	8:30-4:30pm	Hazardous Occupations Training	Concordia-PrairieLand Partners (CTI)
June 20	8:30-5:00pm	Adult Mental Health First Aid Training	Washington-FNB Basement Mtg. Room