

Range land burns used to provide better grazing

Mid-March through the end of April is the time of the year when large areas of Kansas' range land are burned. These burns are conducted to provide better forage for cattle, and to help control invasive species such as Eastern Red Cedar and Sumac. Well planned and managed periodic burns can minimize fire safety danger and are an inexpensive tool for managing range land.

For burns to be conducted safely and effectively, weather and range land conditions must be right. In

years when these conditions are rare, many landowners conduct burns at the same time. If these burns take place when meteorological conditions do not disperse the smoke, air pollutants from the burns can affect people and can be carried long distances.

If you are healthy, you're usually not at a major risk from short-term exposures to smoke. Still, it's a good idea to avoid breathing smoke if you can help it. Smoke is made up of a complex mixture of gases and

fine particles produced when wood and other organic matter burn. The burns also result in ozone formation when some of the gases combine in a chemical reaction in the atmosphere. The fine particles can get into your eyes and respiratory system, where they can cause health problems such as burning eyes, runny nose, and illnesses such as bronchitis. Fine particles and ozone also can aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases and even are linked to premature deaths in people with

these conditions.

Older adults and children are at highest risk for health problems especially those with underlying health conditions. Children's respiratory systems are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults, therefore children have a greater exposure. While we cannot eliminate exposure to smoke during the burning season, there are ways to reduce it and to reduce related health impacts. It is important for

everyone to limit their exposure to smoke, especially if you fall into one of the high-risk categories. Here are some steps you can take to protect your health on days when smoke is impacting your community:

- Healthy people should curtail or avoid strenuous outdoor exercise.
- People with heart or breathing related illnesses should remain indoors
- Help keep indoor air clean by closing doors and windows and running the air conditioner on 're-

circulate' setting.

- Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water.
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue.

For more information please contact the following web site for more information: http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=topics.smoke_events.

Kansans are urged to get colon cancer screenings

Kansas Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger has joined forces with state health organizations in urging Kansans to get colon cancer screenings as member of individual and group health plans.

Commissioner Praeger, The American Cancer Society and the Kansas Association of Health Plans are marking March's National Colon Cancer Awareness Month with a joint statement emphasizing the need for Kansans to educate themselves about the screenings and consult with their health care providers about the need to seek one.

"We know that approximately 50,000 Americans will die of colon cancer this year," Commissioner Praeger said. "We also know that 40,000 of those deaths could be prevented if everyone over the age of 50 get screened with a colonoscopy."



sandy praeger

• insurance comm.

The Commissioner backed up her promotion of the screenings by telling a recent news conference that she had undergone the procedure; she pronounced the stigma of having the procedure as "way overblown."

"Because of the importance of preventive screening, I have supported responsible coverage by all Kansas insurers," Commissioner Praeger said. "I'm pleased that the members of the Kansas Association of Health Plans have voluntarily committed to providing coverage

for preventive screenings according to the American Cancer guidelines."

The health plan association includes the following health plans: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, Children's Mercy Family Health Partners, Coventry Health Care of Kansas, Preferred Health Systems, Unicare and United Healthcare.

Colon cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in men and women in the U.S. and is the third leading cause of cancer death. Risk factors of colon cancer increase with age and more than 90 percent of cases are diagnosed in individuals age 50 and older.

Physicans Assistant to start seeing patients at Colby clinic

Certified Physicans Assistant Andy Rose will start seeing patients on Monday at Citizens Medical Center, 310 E. College, Colby, as a member of Family Center for Health Care. He has signed a five-year contract with them.

"Anyone who has met Andy can attest to his kind and personable personality. Andy and his family have come to call Colby home. We are very happy to have him join our health care organization, and look forward to the next five years and beyond," said Janice McCart, president and chief executive officer of Citizens Medical Center, Inc.

Dr. Darren Matchell added,

"Andy and his family are great. I have had the chance to work with him in the past and I know he is a super addition to the clinic. I look forward to continuing our working relationship."

Andy completed his undergradu-

ate studies at Brigham Young University, and received his Physician Assistant Certification from St. Louis University at St. Louis, Mo. He and his wife Katie have five children, Jacob 18, Brady 14, Garrett 12, Abby 9, and Judson 6.

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