

Green pastures are misleading

With the moisture the area has received these past couple of weeks, pastures have greened up, which is nice to see but can be misleading.

Dry conditions over the last few years have lessened plant vigor by decreasing their ability to store nutrients for spring growth the following year.

Last fall was especially hard on the crown of native pasture grasses. Most of the area never received a good soaking rain to promote fall growth, which decreased plants' ability to make carbohydrates.

Less carbohydrates reduces what the plant can store in its crown and roots during the fall.

The result is an overall reduction in stored building blocks the grass has available to produce growth this spring and to withstand adverse weather.

This reduced fitness could allow the plant to degrade even more, which will continue a spiral-down in fitness until there are very few healthy plants left in a pasture.

So, how can this problem be managed?



Extension Lines

By Brian Olson
Extension Agronomist

Many stockmen have started to manage supplemental feed alternatives. For those with a center pivot, planting alfalfa, forage sorghum, grazing wheat, or developing the pivot into an irrigated pasture are some options being used to provide grazing flexibility.

For those who have all dryland acres, a closely managed rotational grazing system with supplemental forage can decrease grazing pressure and improve pasture health.

Paul Ohlenbusch, a former grazing specialist with K-State Research and Extension, said native pastures may take three years of normal precipitation and growing conditions, and reduced stocking rates before

normal forage production returns. Moisture and growing conditions are out of our control, but we can manage stocking rates.

These vary across our area, but Ohlenbusch suggested at least a 50 percent cutback.

Stocking rates should allow the grazing height to average around 2 inches, since a lower height will impede grass recovery.

The next question is how much is a pasture worth when deciding rent.

Dan O'Brien, former northwest area ag economist said, "From an economic value perspective, flexibility on rental rates should occur on damaged pasture; otherwise, long-term productivity could be hurt, which will decrease the long-term value of the land".

Since most landlords count on a fixed amount of rent for income, this could be unpopular. However, to ensure the value of their land for

years to come, landlords should actually insist on the reduction in stocking rates.

How should rental rates be set? One rule of thumb is if the stocking rate will be reduced by 60 percent, then the rental rate should also be cut by 60 percent.

Both parties need to realize pastures must be managed in a way that will allow them to recover and regain full production.

For further information on forage alternatives and grazing, look at the publications "Summer Annual Forages" and "Stocking Rate and Grazing Management." For more information on how native grasses grow, view the paper entitled "Pasture Management — Before, During, and After a Drought" by visiting the Web site: www.oznet.ksu.edu/agronomy-block2/ and clicking on the Pest and Production icon, or visit your county extension office to pick up a copy.

Brian Olson is multi-county extension agronomist for Decatur, Gove, Norton, Sheridan, and Trego counties. E-mail bolson@oznet.ksu.edu if you have any questions or would like to see a newspaper article on a specific crop production topic. For more information, contact the county extension office, 475-8121.

The Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center has the following position available:
Assistant Director of Special Education

Terms of Employment: 245 days

Salary: Determined by the administrative salary schedule.

Report Date: Negotiable, but prefer July 1, 2004

Qualifications:

- A Master's Degree with valid certification in at least one Special Education area.
- At least five years of successful experience in public school work.
- A valid state certificate in the area of school administration.
- A valid state certificate with the endorsement area as a director of special education must be earned within three years of the initial employment date.
- Such alternatives to the above qualifications as the Board of Directors may find appropriate and acceptable.

Completed file for candidacy must include the following:

- a letter of introduction
- a resume
- a completed NKESC Application for Employment
- reference file including transcripts and three letters of reference less than two years old
- a copy of current Kansas certificate

Return all application materials to: Kathy Kersbrock-Ostmeyer
Director of Special Education
NKESC
703 W. Second
Oakley, KS 67748

For applications to be considered, they must be received by the Director of Special Education no later than 5 p.m. on June 1, 2004.

NKESC is an Equal Opportunity Employer



Home Time

By Tranda Watts
Multi-county Extension Agent

Overexposure can damage your skin

While exposure to the sun can be enjoyable, too much can be dangerous.

Overexposure to ultraviolet radiation in sunlight can result in a painful sunburn.

It can also lead to more serious health effects, including skin cancer, premature aging of the skin, and other skin disorders; cataracts and other eye damage; and immune system suppression.

Children are particularly at risk of overexposure, since most of the average person's lifetime exposure occurs before the age of 18.

Most people are not aware that skin cancer, while largely preventable, is the most common form of cancer in the United States, with more than one million cases reported each year.

By following a number of simple steps, you can enjoy your time in the sun while protecting yourself from overexposure.

Other than staying indoors, no single step can fully protect you from overexposure to ultraviolet radiation, so use as many of the suggestions as possible.

Limit time in the midday sun. The sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Whenever possible, limit exposure during these hours.

Seek Shade. Staying under cover is one of the best ways to protect yourself from the sun. Remember the shadow rule: Watch Your Shadow. No Shadow, Seek Shade!

Always use sun screen. Apply a broad-spectrum sun screen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 or higher liberally on exposed skin, and reapply every two hours when working or playing outdoors.

Even waterproof sun screen can come off when you towel off, sweat or are in the water too long.

Wear a hat. A hat with a wide brim offers good sun protection to your eyes, ears, face, and the back of your neck — areas particularly prone to overexposure.

Cover up. Wearing tightly woven, loose-fitting and full length clothing is a good way to protect your skin from ultraviolet rays.

Wear Sunglasses that block 99-100 percent of ultraviolet radiation. Sunglasses that provide 99-100 percent UVA and UVB protection will greatly reduce sun exposure that can lead to cataracts and other eye damage. Check the label when buying sunglasses.

Avoid sun lamps and tanning parlors. The light source from tanning beds and sun lamps damages the skin and unprotected eyes. It's a good idea to avoid artificial sources of ultraviolet light.

Watch for the UV Index. The UV Index provides important information to help you plan your outdoor activities in ways that prevent overexposure.

Developed by the National Weather Service the Environmental Protection Agency, the UV Index is issued daily in selected cities across the United States.

If you have more questions about sun safety, contact your county extension office.

Tranda Watts is multi-county extension specialist in food, nutrition, health and safety for Decatur, Gove, Norton, Sheridan, and Trego counties. Call her at 785-443-3663 or e-mail twatts@oznet.ksu.edu. For more information, contact the county extension office, 475-8121.

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The City of Oberlin is accepting proposals to remove fencing, for salvage, at Sappa Park.

Contact Gary Shike at the city office or 475-2217 for further information.

Notice Taxpayers

May 10th is the Deadline for the Last Half of 2004 taxes. If not paid on or before May 10, 2004, these taxes will bear interest.

Please bring first half paid receipt or tax statement information when making payment.

Jean Hale
County Treasurer
Decatur County, Kansas