

# *Extension Connection*

**AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER**

**February 2016**

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## **Producers focus on herd sire selection**

Spring breeding season has arrived, and many cattle producers are likely thinking about selecting their next herd sire. This one decision could



affect their profitability drastically, and with the stress of calving season, it is easy to get lost in sire information and make an investment that could be detrimental to the bottom line. Bob Weaber, associate professor of beef breeding and genetics at Kansas State University, said it is important for cattle producers to think about their operation's breeding objective and goals. Producers need to evaluate their current herd performance attributes, and consider where they are performing adequately as well as areas of needed improvement.

## **Preparation before purchase**

Like most things, preparation is crucial to bull buying. Weaber, a K-State Research and Extension cow-calf specialist, recommends that producers think about their marketing endpoint and put selection pressure on those

areas. If marketing or maintaining replacement heifers, for example, bulls with strong maternal predictors would be desired. In this case, producers should focus on expected progeny differences (EPDs) such as calving ease, milk and cow energy value. If marketing calves at weaning, growth EPDs should be the focus. If marketing calves on a grid, bulls with desired carcass predictors are the best choice. In addition to the endpoint focus, Weaber encourages producers to write down their immediate and long-term goals. Focusing on herd rebuilding, resource limitations and retaining replacement heifers might need to be thought out. Choosing between cross and straight breeding should also be part of the selection process. "I encourage producers, if they are thinking of or are in a crossbreeding system, to develop a planned system," Weaber said. "Don't make a decision on short notice – you'll pay for that for a number of years." "The decisions we make buying bulls will have a lasting impact on our cow herd until at least 2025," he continued. "The first-born daughters of bulls will grow a couple of years and be in production likely six, seven or eight calving cycles." If planning to attend a bull sale, make sure to get a sale catalog as soon as possible, Weaber said. Use percentile tables and breed averages while going through the sale catalog, and find animals that excel in the traits identified through the breeding objective. "If buying Angus bulls, for example, search online for 'Angus percentile table,' and that will be a useful tool to evaluate how close to average or extreme an individual bull is for a particular trait within the population," Weaber said. He recommends that producers make a list of suitable bulls that is about three times longer than how many bulls needed. This is helpful in case bulls of interest sell for a price that is out of budget.

## Live inspection important

With list in hand, producers can use days leading up to sale day to inspect and sort through the bulls in person. “If you can go a week or week and a half early, you’ll have more leisure time going through the bulls, talking with the seedstock vendors about their program and maybe go look at cows if you’re thinking of buying a bull to make replacement heifers,” Weaber said. “Try to get a feel for how that cow herd is managed. I encourage you to find one that mimics your own nutrition and management strategy.” Bull buying is a significant investment for producers, and Weaber said no one knows the bulls better than the seller. He suggests that producers take the opportunity to get recommendations from that person. Local extension agents could also provide assistance in matching a producer’s goals to bulls available for purchase. When examining bulls on the list previously ranked on performance data, focus heavily on structure, he said. Foot and leg structure of bulls is crucial to their longevity in the herd. Also, updated data will likely be available on sale day. It is important to make sure all bulls on the list still meet your requirements. “Once you’ve gone through the phenotypic evaluation and knocked off bulls that don’t fit for either body condition or feet and leg structure, find the sale order,” Weaber said. “Often, the sale order is indicative of which bulls the seedstock vendor thinks are the most valuable. Take your list of bulls and the sale order, and make a new list. Put them in priority order based on your evaluation reflective of the order you would purchase them in one column. Next to that, reorder the list in sale order.” If a bull is at the top of the list for priority and sale order, the producer should consider bidding aggressively on him, he said. On the other hand, if a lower priority bull sells early, the producer should consider buying him only if he is at the right price. If that bull sells out of budget, the producer can let him pass and consider others on the list. More information about beef breeding and genetics and bull buying strategies can be found on the K-State Department of Animal Sciences and Industry website.

## 2016 KSU Cattlemen's Day

The 103rd annual Cattlemen's Day will be held on Friday, March 4, 2016 at Weber Hall on the K-State Campus. A brochure, including



the program and registration information is available. Registration will also be available online at [www.KSUBeef.org](http://www.KSUBeef.org). The trade show will open at 8:00 a.m. with the program set to begin at 10:00 a.m. We have a great program lined up for you including a presentation from Paul Heinrich, CEO at Encore Food Solutions and a Cattle Industry Economic Outlook by Glynn Tonsor and Ted Schroeder. The afternoon will include several breakout sessions and will conclude by 3:00 p.m. The Legacy Sale will begin at 3:30 p.m. at the Stanley Stout Center. Mark your calendar and plan on attending this outstanding event. Morning refreshments and lunch are included. Registration with payment is due by Thursday March 3, at noon. Cost is \$20 each or \$30 at the door. For more information contact Lois Schreiner at 785-532-1267 or email [lschrein@ksu.edu.event](mailto:lschrein@ksu.edu.event).

## Pasture weed and brush management webinar planned

Maintaining proper weed and brush control can have a huge impact on summer pastures now, and in the future.



Kansas State

University professors, Walter Fick and Doug Shoup will present “Pasture Weed and Brush Management” at 1:30 p.m. (CT) on Tuesday, Feb. 23. The webinar will be hosted by Great Plains Grazing, a U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agriculture and Food Research Initiative-Coordinated Agricultural Project grant. Fick and Shoup are Great Plains Grazing team members. This is a free webinar, and is open to anyone interested in gaining an understanding of weed and brush control. Participants can expect to learn the following methods of weed and brush control:

- Chemical
- Mechanical
- Burning
- Grazing
- Biological

Fick is a rangeland management specialist with K-State Research and Extension based in the Department of Agronomy. He was raised on a cattle and hay ranch in the Nebraska Sandhills. He earned

bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Nebraska. He completed his Ph.D. in range science at Texas Tech University and was subsequently hired by K-State. Extension responsibilities include prescribed burning, brush and weed control, and grazing management. Current research is on saltcedar and Old World Bluestem. Fick also teaches three upper division courses in range management.

Shoup is an associate professor at K-State. He earned bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. degrees at K-State. He has worked on common waterhemp resistance to PPO inhibiting herbicides such as Cobra, Blazer, and Reflex. In addition, he has been involved in research on growth regulator herbicide drift on cotton and common lambsquarters susceptibility to glyphosate. After college, he worked for Monsanto in its biotechnology soybean program for two years before returning to K-State as its southeast area crops and soils specialist. His current research and extension programs focus on crop production systems, integrated pest management, and forage utilization.

This is the seventh of a series of 12 webinars hosted monthly by Great Plains Grazing. The series aims to provide research-based information, and is targeted for producers and extension agents. Previous webinars are archived and available for viewing on the Great Plains Grazing website. To register for the pasture weed and brush management seminar on Feb. 23, visit Upcoming Webinars.

## **The fight against broadleaf weeds in winter wheat**

Most of the wheat and weeds are inactive during cold weather; however, that can quickly change in the Midwest. While broadleaf weeds are dormant, wheat producers can get a



jump-start on managing them in winter wheat. “The weed and feed approach is a common practice,” said Curtis Thompson, Kansas State University professor of agronomy. “It is a sound practice, because we want to get nitrogen on early – well before the wheat has taken off and

surely before jointing. Putting herbicide in with the nitrogen (fertilizer) can be extremely valuable.” Thompson, a K-State Research and Extension weed management specialist, said it’s important to select a herbicide with residual activity, which means it has adequate persistence at the soil level following application. These herbicides will have an acetolactate synthase (ALS) inhibitor and could include the names Finesse, Rave, Amber, Glean, and Ally, as examples. Producers in western Kansas may be dealing with the weed kochia in early spring. Thompson said these producers might want to also consider including herbicides that contain dicamba in the mix to help control it, or use Rave, which already includes dicamba. Additional herbicides having activity on kochia include Huskie and Starane although they have less residual effect than dicamba.

### **When to apply**

Applying herbicide early can help control weeds post-emergence. “As soon as we start to see any green coming in winter wheat, these winter annual weeds are also beginning to take off,” Thompson said. “That can be an excellent time to apply these herbicides.”

### **Side effects**

Thompson added that most of the ALS inhibitors will not cause leaf burn on wheat. Even when instances of chlorosis occur, the wheat will typically recover. Chlorosis, which happens when leaves appear paler due to insufficient chlorophyll production, typically is in response to a combination of the herbicide application and cold weather, he said. The resulting chlorosis often is cosmetic.

### **Double cropping**

Using herbicides with residual activity is more risky in a double-crop scenario, Thompson said. When double cropping, producers may want to select a herbicide with lower residual activity. When applying a lower residual herbicide, everything must be actively growing to get the best possible weed control. “There are some ALS inhibitor products that have very little residual and should be tank mixed with a growth regulator, such as a dicamba,” he said. “When the wheat is fully tillered, we can use 2,4-D, and at that point we can get our broadleaf weeds controlled. We don’t have to worry about herbicide residuals carrying into the double crop.” The herbicide label is the best reference for producers and should always be consulted, he said.

## **Other considerations**

Thompson said there are restrictions regarding different herbicides. One chemical that is commonly mixed in is dicamba. Dicamba can be applied up to the jointing stage of wheat; 2,4-D has the potential to shut down tillering, thus the wheat must be fully tillered before using. "Frozen soils, herbicides, fertilizer and precipitation do not go hand in hand," Thompson added, as it increases the risk of contaminating surface runoff. More information can be found in the "2016 Chemical Weed Control for Field Crops, Pastures, Rangeland, and Noncropland" from K-State Research and Extension. It is available online or at local extension offices in Kansas.

## **Conservation Trees from the Kansas Forest Service**

The Kansas Forest Service offers low-cost tree and shrub seedlings for use in conservation plantings. Plants are one to two years old and sizes vary from 5 to 18 inches, depending on species. Orders are accepted from now



through the first full week in May each year, but order early to insure receiving the items you want. Orders are shipped from the second week of March through May 5. Approved uses for these plants include wind-breaks, wood lots, riparian plantings, wildlife habitat and Christmas trees. They may not be used for landscape, (ornamental) plantings or grown for resale. All items are sold in units. Each single species unit consists of 25 plants. For example, a unit of Eastern red cedar has 25 trees per unit. Though a single species unit is most commonly purchased, four special bundles are also available including a songbird bundle, quail bundle, pheasant bundle and wildlife mast bundle. Tree planting accessories are also available including marking flags, root protective slurry, rabbit protective tubes, weed barrier fabric and tree tubes. If there have been problems with deer browsing on young trees, the tree tubes are a must. For details and an order form, go to: [www.kansasforests.org/public\\_saps/Welcome.aspx](http://www.kansasforests.org/public_saps/Welcome.aspx). Order forms are also available from our office.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **March:**

- 4<sup>th</sup>: KSU Cattlemen's Day @ Weber Hall on K-State Campus
- 5<sup>th</sup>: Kansas Junior Beef Producer Day @ Weber Hall on K-State Campus
- 12<sup>th</sup>: Finney County 4-H Beef Tag-in
- 19<sup>th</sup>: Kansas Junior Sheep Producer Day @ Weber Hall on K-State Campus

### **April:**

- 9<sup>th</sup>: Finney County Pig Sale
- 16<sup>th</sup>: 4-H Livestock Early Tag-in Showmanship Clinics

### **May:**

- 9 & 10<sup>th</sup>: 4-H Livestock Tag-in
- 20 & 21<sup>st</sup>: Finney County Spring Livestock Show