



Blaine County Agriculture Newsletter

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2020

Blaine County Cooperative Extension Service
212 N Weigle—Watonga OK 73772
Office: 580-623-5195 <http://oces.okstate.edu/blaine>

Fighting the Spoilage Battle with Proper Bale Storage

Dana Zook, Extension Area Livestock Specialist

Depending on who you ask, the term “forage production” will have a different meaning. For some livestock producers, forage production is defined as growing forage for grazing. Other producers consider forage production as growing forage that will be harvested for hay in a round baler. Most producers utilize both sources as feed sources for their livestock. As one would guess, since the invention of the round baler in the 1950’s, the US has seen a significant increase in hay production. More specifically, the Livestock Marketing Information Center reported Oklahoma produces 285% more tons of hay (non-alfalfa) today than in 1974. Yes, some of that production goes to other animals but the bulk of it is used for cattle production. For livestock producers, round bales are extremely convenient. Convenience in this case comes at a cost. Harvested hay will always be more expensive than grazed forage and deficiencies are present in storage, transport and feeding. Today, I wanted to take some time and address losses that can occur during round bale storage. Since the creation of the first-round bale decades ago, livestock producers have been fighting the battle of spoilage. Even when put up right with low moisture and proper density, spoilage can occur. So how do we fight this spoilage battle? Bale storage has a lot to do with the amount of spoilage that can occur. Keeping rain and snow away from the bales is a big factor and bales that are in a barn or are protected from the elements have very low spoilage loss (2-10%). But not every producer has the luxury of a hay barn and other things can be done to help preserve quality. For most producers, outside storage is the most used method.

There are two keys to making and storing quality bales. Baling smart is the first key. Creating a dense bale with a tight core will keep the bale from squatting. This will reduce the amount of hay exposed to the ground. Bale at the correct moisture to preserve leaves and wrap with net wrap. Storing smart is the second key. Store the bales on a well-drained, gradual slope. The bales should be butted together tightly in rows in a North-South direction. Air circulation is important and so keep each row of bales 3-4 feet apart. Do not stack the bales or put them in an area with shade. Sun exposure and air circulation will ensure drying after wet weather events.

As you can see, getting rid of water is the key to all this. Another tip to help shed rain is creating a good “thatch” on the bale. “Thatch” is described as a layer on the outside of the bale formed from leaves on either grass hay or alfalfa. A good thatch layer will allow rain and moisture to be shed from the bale and ensure drying. There are also benefits to net wrap rather than twine in the ability of the bales to shed water. Twine wrapped bales will not have a good thatch because leaves are knocked off the exterior of the bale as the twine is wrapped in the baler. Net wrap only requires the bale be turned a few times within the baler leaving less damage to the bale’s exterior. The addition of net wrap to a well thatched bale will greatly improve the quality of the stored hay, even when exposed to the elements. My thoughts on this topic came from a recent presentation about round bale storage by Dr. Kevin Shinnors who is an Ag Engineer at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. If you are interested in this excellent webinar go to <http://beef.okstate.edu/> and look for the webinar titled, *The Way You Stack Round Bales*

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Blaine County OSU Extension will be hosting a Beef Quality Assurance Program

What is Beef Quality Assurance? Beef Quality Assurance is a program that provides information to U.S. beef producers and beef consumers of how common-sense husbandry techniques can be coupled with accepted scientific knowledge to raise cattle under optimum management and environmental conditions. BQA programs have evolved to include best practices around good record keeping and protecting herd health, which can result in more profits for producers. When better quality cows leave the farm and reach the marketplace, the producer, packer, and consumer all benefit. When better quality beef reaches the supermarket, consumers are more confident in the beef they are buying, and this increases beef consumption.

The program will be Thursday, September 17th from 10 a.m. until noon at the Blaine County Fairgrounds. This is a great opportunity for Beef Producers to take advantage of. Please RSVP by Sept. 14 for lunch count.

Please encourage all of your neighbors to attend. For more information call the Blaine County OSU Extension Office.

Beef Webinars

For more interesting webinars related to beef go to <http://beef.okstate.edu> and sign up for OSU Extensions Beef Webinar Series titled *Ranchers Thursday Lunchtime Series*. The upcoming series focus is Feeding Alfalfa.

Farm Management Resources Found on Your Smartphone

Producers can access digital farm financial management, production, marketing, and risk management topics online by visiting the e-Farm Management website. This site catalogs videos, decision tools, and publications for farmers and ranchers to strengthen their farm management skills.

In the Tillage Series – Types of Tillage video, viewers learn about the two main types of tillage. The video discusses the main purposes of primary and secondary tillage. Lastly, they see examples of the various types of tillage.

To view this video and find additional information on grain production, visit: <http://agecon.okstate.edu/efarmmanagement/grain.asp>.

More information on this and other farm management topics may be found: 1) by contacting your nearest Extension Educator (<https://extension.okstate.edu/county/index.html>) 2) on the e-farm management website (<http://agecon.okstate.edu/efarmmanagement/index.asp>) or 3) on the OSU Agricultural Economics YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/OkStateAgEcon>).

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Editor—Becky Bedwell, Extension Educator— Ag/4-H & CED

Blaine County Agriculture Newsletter

Winter wheat grazing prospects

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Winter wheat is used for grain-only, forage-only or dual-purpose systems targeting cattle grazing and grain production. In the Southern Plains, stocker producers interested in grazing winter wheat pastures often begin planting wheat in late August or early September. The desire to jump-start wheat forage growth by planting early in the fall must be balanced against frequent seasonal drought and hot soil temperatures that prevent wheat germination. Conditions this year vary across Oklahoma ranging from very dry to adequate moisture with generally favorable soil temperatures. Early planted wheat also faces a bigger likelihood of fall armyworm or other pest invasions, disease pressure and increased weed competition. Dual-purpose wheat producers must navigate both the production tradeoffs between wheat forage and grain production as well as the economic challenges in wheat and cattle markets.

Current feeder cattle prices provide an indication of the economic prospects for fall and winter grazing. In the last week of August, the Oklahoma average auction price for 475-pound steers was \$165.25/cwt. with 750-pound steers at \$140.40/cwt. This calculates to a value of gain of \$0.975/pound for 275 pounds of gain. Across beginning weights of 450-600 pounds, the value of gain ranges from \$0.90 to \$1.00/lb. using current auction prices. Cost of production is likely less than \$0.90/lb. in many cases, suggesting potential positive returns for stocker production.

A common wheat pasture grazing budget is based on October stocker purchases with feeders marketed in early March including roughly 120 days of winter grazing. For example, based on current market conditions, 475-pound steer price is projected to be between \$160 and \$165/cwt. in October. This estimate is suggested by both typical seasonal cash price patterns and October Feeder futures at the current time. Budgets using a range of purchase prices, feed costs, and average daily gain result in a range of estimated March breakeven prices from \$129 - \$139/cwt. with the most likely values from \$132-\$136/cwt. for animals weighing about 750 pounds at sale. Current March feeder futures, adjusted for Oklahoma basis, suggest a 750-pound steer price of about \$140/cwt. in early March. Market conditions right now suggest some potential for winter grazing returns above production costs.

Markets will no doubt evolve this fall and producers must continue to evaluate winter grazing potential under dynamic market conditions. Winter grazing potential may vary widely for a range of stocker production alternatives. Prior to purchase, producers should consider flexibility for stocker operations including the size of animals purchased, animal gender and quality and length of grazing period. The old adage of stocker production is that profits are made on the buy and only collected at sale; that is to say “bought right is half sold”.

General economic uncertainty and volatility will continue to be particularly important in cattle markets and risk management should be carefully considered. Futures markets may offer an opportunity to lock in a margin on winter grazing. However, risk management requires deliberate action to implement a plan. Market opportunities are often fleeting, and producers may have to act quickly to take advantage of changing market conditions. It is important to have a marketing and risk management plan in place to help guide stocker purchases and production. Winter wheat grazing seasons in the Southern Plains typically include a range of conditions. Fall 2020 is starting with some potential and perhaps a bit of excitement.

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Planting Wheat Early

Dr. Bob Hunger, Extension Wheat Plant Pathologist

Much of the winter wheat sown in Oklahoma is used as a dual-purpose crop.

In such a system, wheat is grazed by cattle from late fall through late winter/early spring and then harvested for grain in early summer. In a grain-only system, wheat is generally planted in October, but in a dual-purpose system wheat is planted in early to mid-September to maximize forage production. Planting wheat early significantly increases the likelihood that diseases and insect pests such as mite-transmitted viruses, the aphid/barley yellow dwarf complex, root and foot rots, and Hessian fly will be more prevalent and severe. For more detailed information on planting date and seed treatment considerations on wheat, see CR-7088 (Effect of Planting Date and Seed Treatment on Diseases and Insect Pests of Wheat) at: <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7836/CR-7088web2012.pdf>

Interested in being part of a Research Trial with our Area Livestock Specialist?

Our area livestock specialist and the OSU Vet School is looking for producers in northwest Oklahoma that would like to be involved in a research trial on the "Efficiency of deworming calves.

Things you need to know:

- We are looking for 5 herds of calves (at least 20 calves) that have not been previously dewormed, which might be hard to find. Those calves need to be individually identified and currently grazing pastures.
- We will collect fecal samples prior to deworming and then again 2 weeks after deworming.

If you are interested, please contact the Blaine County OSU Extension Office at 580-623-5195.

Garden Tips For Fall

Landscape

Watch for fall specials at garden centers and nurseries since fall is a great time for planting many ornamentals. Choose spring flowering bulbs as soon as available.

Plant cool-season annuals like pansies, ornamental cabbage or kale, snapdragons and dusty miller when temperatures begin to cool.

Watch for and control any late infestations of tree webworms.

Twig girdler insects should be controlled if large numbers of small branches of elms, pecans, or persimmons are uniformly girdled from the tree and fall to the ground.

Begin to reduce the amount of light on outside tropical houseplants by placing them under shade trees before bringing them indoors for the winter.

Vegetables

You have all of September to plant cool-season vegetables like spinach, leaf lettuce, mustard and radishes, and until the middle of September to plant rutabagas, Swiss chard, garlic and turnips.



OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

BQA Training + OQBN Update

- Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Certification and Renewal
Note: BQA certification is valid for 3 years
- Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) Update
- Q&A regarding OQBN program
- Note: BQA Certification required for all OQBN participants starting Fall 2020 Sale Season
- Lunch will be provided sponsored by Oklahoma Beef Council

Speaker: *Dana Zook, OSU Area Livestock Specialist
Becky Bedwell, Blaine County Ag Educator
Derrell McBee, Dewey/Harper Co. Ag Educator
Bob LeValley, BQA Coordinator*



**September 17, 2020
10:00 AM – 12 PM**

**Blaine County Fairgrounds
Watonga, OK**

RSVP by September 14, 2020

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