LOGAN COUNTY EXTENSION NEWS

March 2020

Horticulture Tips March 2020

By: David Hillock, OSU Consumer Horticulturist

Lawn and Turf

* Remove excessive thatch from warm-season lawns. Dethatching, if necessary, should precede crabgrass control treatment. (HLA-6604)
* Broadleaf weeds can easily be controlled in cool-season lawns at this time with post-emergent broadleaf herbicides.
* Preemergent crabgrass control chemicals can still be applied to cool and warm season turfgrasses. Heed label cautions when using any weed killers near or in the root zone of desirable plantings.
* March is the second best time of the year to seed cool-season turfgrass; however, fall is the best time to plant. (HLA-6419)
* Cool-season lawns such as bluegrass, fescue, and ryegrass may be fertilized now with the first application of the season. Usually, four applications of fertilizer are required per year, in March, May, October, and November. (HLA-6420)
* Begin mowing cool-season grasses at 1½ to 3½ inches high. (HLA-6420)

Flowers and Vegetables

* Cultivate annual flower and vegetable planting beds to destroy winter weeds.
* Apply mulch to control weeds in beds. Landscape fabric barrier can reduce the amount of mulch but can dry out and prevent water penetration. Thus, organic litter makes the best mulch.
* Prune roses just before growth starts and begin a regular disease spray program as the foliage appears on susceptible varieties. (HLA-6403 & EPP-7607)
* Avoid excessive walking and working in the garden when foliage and soils are wet.
* Start warm-season vegetable transplants indoors.
* Divide and replant overcrowded summer and fall blooming perennials. Mow or cut back old liriope and other ornamental grasses before new growth begins.
* Your cool-season vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, carrot, lettuce, onion, peas, spinach, turnips, etc. should be planted by the middle of March.
* Watch for cutworms that girdle newly planted vegetables during the first few weeks of establishment. Cabbage looper and cabbageworm insects should be monitored and controlled in the garden (EPP-7313).

Trees and Shrubs

* Prune spring flowering plants, if needed, immediately following their bloom period.
* Plant evergreen shrubs, balled and burlapped, and bare root trees and shrubs.
* Anthracnose control on sycamore, maple, and oak should begin at bud swell. (EPP-7634)
* Diplodia Pine Tip blight control on pines begins at bud swell.
* Chemical and physical control of galls (swellings) on stems of trees should begin now. (EPP-7168 & EPP-7306)
* Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. (EPP-7306)
* The first generation of Nantucket Pine Tip Moth appears at this time. Begin pesticide applications in late March. (EPP-7306)
* Control Eastern tent caterpillars as soon as the critters appear.

Fruits

* Continue to plant strawberries, asparagus, and other small fruit crops this month.

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In This Issue

Skunk Damage Management

The striped skunk is a common mammal found statewide, and they are often found in the home landscape. Most complaints regarding skunks involve either damage to turf because they are digging for food in the soil or when skunks get in buildings or under homes.

Skunk damage in lawns can look similar to tree squirrels and armadillo. Tracks or visual sighting are the best ways to differentiate between species causing turf damage, although skunk digging is often more shallow (2-3") and smaller (3-4") than armadillo damage.

Striped skunks may be killed at any time in Oklahoma on land you personally own or on land that you lease for agricultural purposes. If you are trapping skunks on someone else's land not leased specifically for agriculture, a hunting and trapping license is required to trap and kill skunks. Note that spotted skunks also occur in Oklahoma (in very low numbers) and they are a protected species that cannot be killed. Skunks can be easily trapped using live catch traps (7" x 7"x 24"). The trap should be baited with cat food, tuna, or sardines. This size trap and bait type will often capture opossums and domestic cats as well.

Once you have the skunk trapped, you can humanely kill it with a firearm assuming it is legal to do so where you reside (typically it is not legal to discharge a firearm in city limits). If it is not legal to use a firearm, you can either move the skunk for release elsewhere (landowner permission is required if you do not own the land) or call a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator to handle the skunk. **https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/law/nwco-operators**.

While skunks are not eager to spray and are typically docile animals, it is still advisable to cover the trap with a blanket or tarp if the trap has to be moved.

To kill the skunk, approach the trap calmly, pull back the cover and shoot the animal in the head or base of the neck with a small caliber firearm. Be sure to wear safety glasses to prevent body fluid or debris from hitting your eyes. Many skunks will spray when shot, but shooting the brain will reduce the chance and will kill the animal instantly. Shooting the animal from a distance (to avoid the possibility of getting sprayed) will almost certainly cause the skunk to spray the trap. If the skunk does spray, use a mixture of one quart hydrogen peroxide, ¼ cup baking soda, and two teaspoons liquid dish soap if you wish to clean the trap. Note: do not seal this mixture in a container as the hydrogen peroxide releases gas which can cause a closed container to explode.

Mothballs may help to keep skunks out of enclosed spaces, but they should be used cautiously where people reside. Exclusion is the most effective way to reduce skunk damage in homes or structures. To prevent skunks from entering structures, seal any holes where entry is possible. Trap any skunks that may be present at the entry point. If a skunk sprays in or under the structure, it may take weeks for the odor to completely disappear.

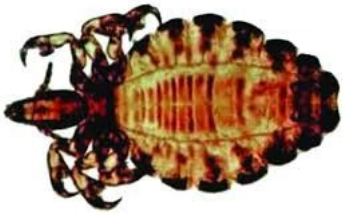
Cattle Lice

By: Earl H. Ward, Area Livestock Specialist

Last week we began to see patches of hair coming off steers' necks. That means we are seeing the results of lice that should have been treated months ago. Oklahoma has four different species of lice. Three of these species are sucking lice and the fourth is biting lice. It is the sucking lice that makes the largest impact on the animal's performance.

The entire lifecycle of lice is spent on the host and can be completed in as few as 16 days. Lice populations increase during the winter months and decrease during the summer due to not being able to survive the high temperatures. Animals that have lice will lick, scratch, or rub areas that are itchy. Inspect your animals by parting the hair and examining the skin for lice. If two or more lice are found per four-inch area, then treatment should follow. Diagnosing lice seems easy but can be mistaken for ringworm or scabies.

The treatment for lice is fairly simple. Although it is recommended to control lice in the fall, most of us find ourselves finding the symptoms in the spring. All species can be treated with sprays that target both the biting and sucking lice. We used a pour-on insecticide that covered both internal and external parasites for our steers. Since the lice eggs are not affected by the insecticide, a retreatment is recommended two to three weeks after initial treatment. For more information about lice, see your OSU Extension or visit **www.livestockbugs.okstate.edu**.



Garden Tips. . .Continued from page 1

* Start your routine fruit tree spray schedule prior to bud break. (EPP-7319). ·
* Remove winter mulch from strawberries in early March (HLA-6214).

Tomato Varieties

Productivity, fruit characteristics, and resistance to diseases should be considered when selecting tomato varieties. Resistance to Fusarium wilt and nematodes is particularly important as these are common problems in areas of Oklahoma. OCES Fact Sheet HLA-6012 "Growing Tomatoes in the Home Garden" discusses tomato disease prevention in more detail. The following list includes varieties that have proven satisfactory for Oklahoma. However, it is not inclusive and other varieties to consider are found in Fact Sheet HLA-6032 "Vegetable Varieties for the Home Garden." Also, consider the gardener's needs and taste preferences.

Fresh Market (Large Fruit)		
Bella Rose	**Better Boy**	**BHN 602**
Big Beef	**Carolina Gold**	**Celebrity**
Crista	**Florida 47R**	**Mountain Glory**
Mountain Magic	**Red Defender**	**Solar Fire**
Cherry Types		
Sun Gold	**Mountain Belle**	**Washington Cherry**
Grape Type		
Jolly Elf	**Smarty**	
Roma (Paste) Type		
Nilano	**Picas**	**Plum**
Plum Regal	**Roma**	**San Remo**

Is COVID-19 Impacting Beef Demand?

By: Derrell S. Peel, OSU Livestock Marketing Specialist

Wholesale beef prices typically increase seasonally from February into March but have showed only scant improvement from the February low three weeks ago. Last week, the Choice boxed beef cutout was $ 206.94 cwt., up $1.23/cwt. from the February low, but 8.0 percent below the same time last year. Wholesale cutout values are increasingly lower in recent weeks compared to year ago levels.

Current wholesale values are lower year over year for all beef primals. Rib primal values have moved higher since February, but are currently 10.4 percent below values at this time last year. Loin primal values likewise have increased seasonally but were 10.8 percent lower year over year last week. Brisket values are down the most, currently 13.8 percent lower than the same point last year. Chuck primal values are down 7.0 percent year over year. Round primal values have been the strongest and were above year earlier levels until last week, dropping to 1.3 percent lower than the same time last year.

The Select boxed beef cutout value was $201.80/cwt. last week, down 7.5 percent year over year. The general pattern of year to year comparisons for Select beef primals is similar to Choice primals with all Select primals lower year over year. The Choice-Select spread reached the seasonal low in late January at $1.92/cwt. on a weekly basis, two weeks earlier than usual mid-February low. The Choice-Select spread has improved seasonally to $5.14/cwt. in the first week of March. The Choice-Select spread typically increases to the first of two seasonal peaks in late May or early June before dropping in the summer and bouncing back again in the fourth quarter of the year.

Weakness in boxed beef prices does not necessarily mean that beef demand is lower. Beef production is up 5.1 percent year over year for the first eight weeks of 2020. Beef prices would normally be pressured with higher beef production even with stable demand. Increased beef production is the result of a 1.3 percent year over year increase in cattle slaughter so far this year along with increased carcass weights. Fed beef production is up year over year with steer and heifer slaughter up 0.7 percent for the year to date combined with steer carcasses averaging 19.6 pounds heavier year over year and heifer carcasses averaging 10.6 pounds heavier. In the latest weekly data, steer carcass weights are 26 pounds heavier than the same week last year with heifer carcasses weighing 13 pounds more compared to last year.

Has COVID-19 impacted beef demand? It's too early to tell for sure. It is certainly possible that there has been some negative impacts, especially on export demand. Impacts on domestic demand may be yet to come. It will be important to watch both demand and supply in the coming weeks to see if the current beef and cattle market expectations will have to be revised significantly. There are a multitude of market factors to sort out including: new trade agreements, macroeconomic changes (stock market, interest rates, etc.), exchange rates, African Swine Fever, and others that will make it more difficult to determine the more direct impacts of COVID-19 on international and domestic beef markets. Stay tuned.

Army Cutworms

Several people, including Lanie Hale, Rob Anderson, and Mike Rosen of Wheeler Brothers and Area Extension Agronomist Heath Sanders have reported possible army cutworm activity. These reports are based on direct observations and noticeable crow and blackbird "gatherings" in some wheat and alfalfa fields in areas of western Oklahoma. Infestation levels were at the "caution" stage at this time and caterpillars measured ¼ to ½ inches.

Army cutworms tolerate cold and feed throughout the winter months. Adult army cutworm moths migrate to Oklahoma each fall (August through October) from their grounds in the Rocky Mountains. They seek bare or sparsely vegetated fields (like a newly prepared field ready for wheat planting, or a field that was "dusted in" and had not yet or just emerged, or a newly planted alfalfa stand). The eggs hatch soon after deposition. A producer might see different sizes of larvae in a field due to the long migration period. Army cutworms feed throughout the winter and molt seven times before they turn into pupae in the soil. Most larvae will have pupated by mid-late March. Adult moths begin emerging in April to fly back to the Rocky Mountains to spend the summer.

Army cutworms can severely damage wheat, canola, and newly planted stands of alfalfa if not controlled. Cutworm damage often goes unnoticed through much of the winter because the caterpillars grow slowly and don't get big enough to cause noticeable damage until temperatures warm in the spring.

One early indication cutworm presence in a field is the gathering of blackbirds and or crows that seem to be actively feeding. It becomes important to check the fields for cutworms before they cause damage and loss.

Sample a field by stirring or digging the soil to a depth of two inches at five or more locations. The cutworms will be "greenish grey." and will probably curl up into a tight "C" when disturbed.

It is better to control army cutworms when they are small (½ inch long or less). Army cutworms are very susceptible to pyrethroid insecticides. At this time of year, an insecticide application can be combined with a late winter top-dress nitrogen application. Suggested treatment thresholds for army cutworms in wheat are 2-3 worms per row foot when conditions are dry and 4-5 per row foot if moisture is adequate. Current recommendations for army cutworm control in small grains are listed in CR-7194, Management of Insect and Mite Pests in Small Grains.

The suggested treatment threshold for cutworms in canola is 1-2 per row-foot. Current recommendations for control of army cutworms in canola are listed in CR-7667, Management of Insect and Mite Pests in Canola. In newly seeded alfalfa, the threshold is 1-2 larvae per square foot. In established alfalfa fields, the threshold is 2-4 larvae per square foot and should be adjusted based on the size of the caterpillars (2-3 per square foot if caterpillars are more than ½ inches, 3-4 per square foot if less than ½ inches).

Current recommendations for control of army cutworms in alfalfa are listed in CR-7150, Alfalfa Forage Insect Control.

Armyworm Adult Moth

Do you want to know what Extension is doing in Logan County? Find out on these websites.

https://www.facebook.com/loganOCES/
https://www.facebook.com/LoganCountyOK4H/
https://www.facebook.com/LoganMasterGardener / http://oces.okstate.edu/logan

Time to Evaluate Beef Cow Herd Breeding Potential

By: Britt Hicks, Area Extension Livestock Specialist

With spring calving approaching, now would be a good time to evaluate the breeding potential of your cows. Research has shown that the body condition score (BCS) of beef cows at the time of calving has a huge impact on subsequent rebreeding performance. Body condition scoring is a practical management tool to allow beef producers to distinguish differences in nutritional needs of beef cows in the herd. Simply put, BCS estimates the energy status (fat cover) of cows. The scoring system used is a 1 to 9 point scale where a BCS 1 cow is extremely thin while a BCS 9 cow is extremely fat and obese. A BCS 5 cow is in average flesh or body condition. A change of 1 BCS is equivalent to about 90 lb. of body weight. To optimize pregnancy rates, mature cows should have BCS of 5 or greater at calving and 1st calf heifers should have a BCS of at least 6 at calving

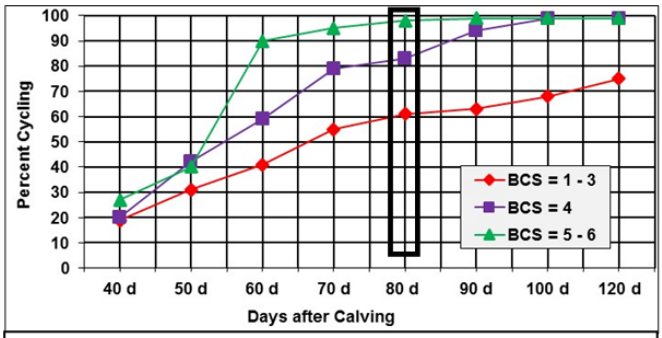


Figure 1. Body Condition Score at Calving and Return to Cycling (Adapted from Wiltbank., 1983).

Research has shown that the BCS of beef cows at the time of calving has a huge impact on subsequent rebreeding performance. This occurs because the BCS of a cow influences days to first estrus after calving and calving interval. For a cow to maintain a 365 day calving interval, she must conceive within about 82 days after calving (283 day gestation + 82 day postpartum interval = 365 days). Figure 1 illustrates that 90% of the beef cows with BCS >5 at calving showed signs of estrus by 60 days post-calving, whereas only 59% of beef c cows with BCS 4, and only 41% of beef cows with BCS <3 showed estrus. The rectangular box in this figure shows the critical breeding time in order to achieve a 365-day calving interval. Even though cows that calve in a BCS of 7 have a short postpartum interval, it is not economical to feed cows to a BCS of 7.

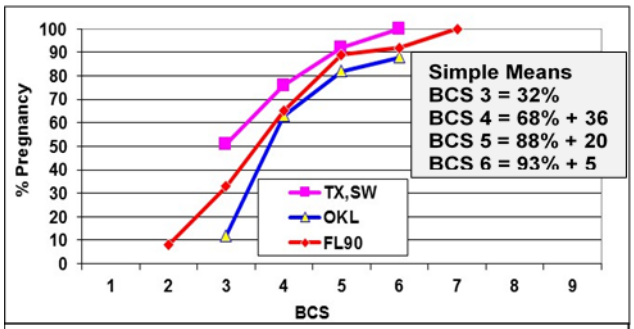


Figure 2. Effect of body condition score (BCS) at calving on pregnancy rate.

Research (Figure 2) suggests that increasing calving BCS from 3 to 4 would increase pregnancy rate by about 36 percentage points (from 32 to 68%). Increasing calving BCS from a 4 to a 5 would increase pregnancy rates by about 20 percentage points (from 68 to 88%). Note this same effect of BCS at calving on pregnancy rates has been observed in different regions of the country (Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas).

In addition, thin cows at calving (BCS 4 or thinner) produce less colostrum, give birth to less vigorous calves that are slower to stand and these calves have lower immunoglobulin levels, thus reducing their ability to overcome early calf-hood disease challenges. All of these data illustrate the importance of targeting mature cows to calve in a BCS of at least 5. Since 1st-calf-heifers have only reached about 85% of their mature weight after calving and require additional nutrients to support growth, it is recommended that they be fed so they are a BCS of 6 at calving.

If your cows currently have inadequate condition, there is still some time to change the BCS prior to calving. Manage your mature cows for a BCS of 5+ at calving. If the cows are in BCS of 5 at calving, a slow gradual weight loss after calving is acceptable. Whereas, if the cows are less than BCS 5 at calving then one needs to hold or increase BCS (weight gain) after calving. However, increasing BCS from calving until breeding will be difficult and costly since cows are lactating.

Maintaining body condition at calving is always important. However, with the dry conditions we are experiencing, it is even more important this year.

Access Farm Management Resources Whenever You Need Them

Producers can find information on farm financial management, production, marketing, and risk management topics through their smartphones by visiting the e-Farm Management website. This site contains videos, decision tools, and publications for farmers and ranchers to strengthen their farm management skills. In the Crop Insurance Basics video, viewers learn questions to ask themselves to help identify their crop insurance needs. The video explains the steps to determine crop insurance coverage requirements for a producer's individual situation. Lastly, the video shows different types of crop insurance coverages and options

To view this video and find additional information on crop insurance and the Noninsured Assistan tance Program, visit**:**
http://agecon.okstate.edu/efarmmanagement/crop.asp.
More information on this and other farm management topics may be found:
(1) by contacting your nearest Extension Educator
(2) on the e-farm management website visit **http://agecon.okstate.edu/efarmmanagement/index.asp**
(3) on the OSU Ag Econ YouTube Channel visit **https://www.youtube.com/user/OkStateAgEcon**

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