OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

First Quarter 2026 Issue
Quarterly Agriculture Newsletter

AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

Developing Forage Efficient Heifers

Dana Zook, NW OK Area Livestock Specialist

Although the national reports show little indication of heifer retention above normal levels thus far in 2025, I know there many producers retaining heifers for future herd replacements. Heifer retention isn't a small task. Cattle markets are STRONG and forgoing the value of a heifer at the sale barn is a hard decision. I could use this article to review the identifiers of a "worthy" replacement heifer, but I decided to share some interesting research related to forage-use efficiency in heifers, a topic that I believe is overlooked.

What is forage-use efficiency? In simple terms, this is how well a heifer performs with nutrition that is naturally available on a ranch. At Oklahoma State University, Dr. Lalman and his team are looking at forage-use efficiency with cows and heifers using a forage intake system which measures how much forage is consumed. Cattle are tested at the Forage Intake Facility at the Ranch Cow Research Center near Stillwater, OK. During a test, cattle spend approximately 90 days in the facility and are tested for weight gain using only forage and mineral supplement. Animals that have a balance of efficient forage intake with moderate weight gain are identified as "forage efficient".

This isn't just something researchers can do -producers can apply this tactic on their operation! To utilize this practice, weaned and preconditioned heifers should be individually weighed and then turned out on a forage resource such as native range for 70 to 100 days. Very little or no supplements are provided other than mineral. Cattle on the test at OSU receive 12-14% CP bermuda; a forage that wouldn't require additional supplement. This is important because any added feed will skew the results (this is important). After the test, heifers are then pulled back in for individual weights. This information is powerful in determining which heifers will perform at the desired level and who are the best "match" to the environment on the ranch.

Major County OSU Extension Office

Address
500 E. Broadway
Courthouse Suite 3
Fairview, OK 73737

Phone
580-227-3786

Email
andrea.perkins10@okstate.edu

Website
extension.okstate.edu/county/major

Social Media
Facebook:
Major County OSU Extension

In this issue

Efficient Heifers continued from page 1

A contrasting practice to this method in heifer development is bulking up nutrition prior to breeding with the goal of getting the highest cyclicity and pregnancy rates. It could be that the heifer that bred early under this intensive system the first year will not perform well in the future when they only have standing forage to eat. This method of development doesn't serve cattle producers who rely on forage-based cow-calf systems. It also doesn't identify heifers who underperform on a specific ranches forage system. In a time when all inputs to cattle production are high, the last thing a producer wants is a cow that needs twice as much forage to survive than her herd mate. She will either not breed back in a timely manner or will cost you twice the amount in feed over her lifetime.

Dr. Lalman and his team hypothesize that "heifers demonstrating moderate forage intake with acceptable growth will ultimately become more forage-efficient cows". As we close out the year and heifer retention slowly begins, I challenge producers to evaluate their heifer development systems. Do you provide an "artificial" environment for heifer development? Or do you challenge heifers to perform in their natural environment utilizing standing forage or moderate quality hay to allow the best heifers to shine? If you are interested in this topic, take a look at the article titled "Finding Forage Efficient Heifers by David Lalman and Bailey Tomson in the December 15th Edition of Cow Calf Corner. You can find this online when searching for Oklahoma State Cow Calf Corner. While you are there, subscribe to their weekly newsletter and get it right in your inbox!

Getting Started with Small Ruminants Series

Major County OSU Extension will be hosting Getting Started with Small Ruminants series that will run throughout the year and will focus on commercial sheep and goats. This series will have four different meeting dates and area locations. A meal will be provided at each meeting. The first meeting date was supposed to be January 22, but it has been postponed due to impending weather. We will come up with a new date as soon as possible and share with you.

Fundamentals of Ag Futures Markets

Major County OSU Extension office will be hosting a meeting with Dr. Todd Hubbs, Oklahoma State University Small Grains Economist. On February 17, 2026, at 7:30 am. He will be discussing future prices of small grains. The meeting will be held at the Major County Fairgrounds. Breakfast will be provided. Please RSVP to the Major County OSU Extension Office (580) 227-3786 by February 13.

Major County Brand Book

It is time to update the Major County Brand Book. There is no cost to have your brand or brands printed in the Major County Brand Book. Individuals may submit brands that are or are not registered through the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association or registered in the Oklahoma brand book. This book is not just limited to individuals living in Major County. To have your brand published in the 2026 Major County Brand Book, please fill out a form and submit it by February 20, 2026. If you have any questions, please call the Major County Extension Office at (580) 227-3786.

GETTING STARTED WITH

SMALL RUMINANTS

SERIES

JANUARY 22ND, 2026 6PM

Alfalfa County Fairgounds

APRIL 30TH, 2026 6PM

Major County Fairgounds

JULY 16TH, 2026 6PM

Woods County-NW Tech Center

OCTOBER 2026 TBD

QUESTIONS? CONTACT THE ALFALFA COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE AT (580)596-3131.
PLEASE RSVP 1 WEEK BEFORE EACH MEETING. MEAL WILL BE PROVIDED.

ALFALFA COUNTY EXTENSION

MAJOR COUNTY EXTENSION

WOODS COUNTY EXTENSION

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communications, program information or reasonable accommodations, need to contact Erin Metcalf at (580)596-3131 at least two weeks prior to the event.
OSU is an Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, E-Verify Employer.

PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURES SUCCESS:

FUNDAMENTALS OF AG FUTURES MARKETS

Date Change

February 17TH, 2026 7:30 AM

AT THE MAJOR COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
808 E HIGHLAND STREET FAIRVIEW, OK 73737

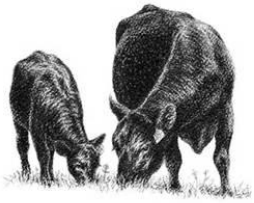
SPEAKER:
DR. TODD HUBBS
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
SMALL GRAINS ECONOMIST

MAJOR COUNTY EXTENSION

Please RSVP to the Major Co OSU Extension office (580) 227-3786 by Jan 23rd

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication or program information or reasonable accommodations, please contact Andrea Perkins at 580-227-3786 at least one week prior to the program.

Oklahoma State University, is an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color national origin, marital status, disability or vetern status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions.



2026 Major County Brand Book

The Major County Brand Book is being updated at this time to help aid in identifying livestock in Major County that are out of place. There is no cost to have your brand or brands printed in the Major County brand book. Individuals may submit brands that are or are not registered through the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association or registered in the Oklahoma brand book. This book is not just limited to individuals living in Major County. If you have any questions, please call the Major County Extension Center at (580)227-3786.

To have your brand published in the 2026 Major County brand book, please submit the following information by February 20, 2026.

Name _____

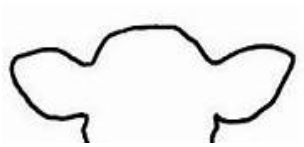
Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name of brand _____

Location(s) of brand _____

RSH-Right shoulder	RR-Right rib	RH-right hip
LSH-Left shoulder	LR-Left rib	LH-Left hip



Ear notches

Cattle Horse

Is this a State registered brand? Yes _____ No _____

Freeze brand _____ Hot brand _____

Location: Where stock might be located. North, South, East, West parts of the county:

_____

_____

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, disability or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions.

Sandbur Control

Josh Bushong, Area Extension Agronomist

Sandburs are a common weed issue found in pastures, forage crops, and lawns. As the name implies, sandburs are typically more of an issue in sandy soils. They are an annual warm season grass, but with a mild winter can behave as a short-lived perennial. Seeds can germinate all summer, but most will germinate in May and June.

Sandburs can obviously be an issue with livestock in pastures and hay production but can also reduce forage quality and quantity. Since sandbur seeds can stay viable in the soil for 5 to 8 years, the main objective for suppression would be reducing seed development. Control will take several years of intensive management utilizing both cultural practices and herbicides.

Proper weed management starts with taking care of the soil, which starts with taking a soil sample. To give the desired crops a completive edge, soil pH and nutrient deficiencies will need to be corrected and maintained. Sandburs are more tolerant of acidic (low pH) soils than many warm season forages. Applying adequate nitrogen will be the most beneficial to improve the stand of the desired forage. Correcting phosphorus and potassium will also help improve root development and plant regrowth.

In addition to soil fertilization, other cultural suppression practices include managing stocking rates and prescribed burning. Proper stocking rates should be managed to retain adequate biomass for the crop to regrow at a faster pace and stay completive with sandburs. For Bermudagrass, leaving 2 to 3 inches is essential for good regrowth for both haying and grazing.

Prescribed burning can reduce sandbur seed production if executed at the right time and with high intensity. Fall burns will likely be better, unless there is sufficient fuel (old growth) for a hot spring burn. If the fire from the burn is not hot enough, it may actually stimulate germination. At first one would think that would be a bad thing. After the light burn a higher percentage will emerge the first year, which an herbicide would effectively control a larger percentage of the sandbur population in one application.

There are a few herbicides that can be used to assist in sandbur control. Unfortunately, most are only labeled in bermudagrass. There are no herbicides labeled for sandbur control in Old World Bluestem, crabgrass, and some native grasses. In most native grass pastures, herbicides with the active ingredient imazepic (Plateau, Panoramic, or Impose) will provide some control but will also cause some crop injury to the native grasses. This injury is often temporary and lessened if good growing conditions follow herbicide application.

For bermudagrass, the use of a preemergence (applied before sandburs germinate) herbicide like pendimethalin (Prowl H2O) will help reduce half to two-thirds of the largest and earliest flush of sandburs.

A newer product now available, called Rezilon, gives farmers another preemergent herbicide option. It is recommended to be applied well before sandbur germination. If sandburs have already emerged this product will not provide any control. Ideally it should be applied late-winter but can also be applied mid-season generally after the first cutting to prevent late-season sandbur emergence.

The first application of Rezilon needs to be applied by February. It can control and suppress weeds for up to 4 months, so depending on when the first application was made a second application might be needed in June or July. A rainfall event or irrigation of at least a half of an inch is needed to move the product from the soil surface to the sandbur seeds in the soil. For most effective control, a water incorporation needs to occur within three weeks.

Sandbur Control continued from page 6

If applying Rezilon after sandbur emergence or if there are perennial sandbur plants found, tank-mixing a postemergence product like glyphosate might be needed. Add Rezilon to the sprayer prior to adding the glyphosate to prevent tank-mix issues or reduced weed control. Rezilon is a suspension concentrate product that needs constant agitation in the sprayer to keep it in solution.

Rezilon doesn't have any grazing restrictions, but grazing after an application and prior to incorporating rain can reduce weed control. There is not a haying restriction when applied at 3 ounces per acre. There is a 40-day haying restriction if more than 3 ounces are applied.

Postemergence (applied after bermudagrass and sandburs are actively growing) herbicide options include glyphosate (Roundup Weathermax), imazepic (Plateau), or nicosulfuron with metsulfuron (Pastura). Read and follow label directions for rates, application timings, and surfactants to limit crop injury and to achieve satisfactory sandbur control.

Lack of control is usually due to herbicide application timing. Sandbur growth stage is critical for some products. For instance, after sandburs reach 1.5 inches tall the expected control will be reduced with products like Pastora. If applied correctly, over 90 percent of the sandburs can be controlled with the postemergence herbicides. Keep in mind, sandburs will continue to emerge as the season progresses which may make it appear like the early herbicide application failed.

Herbicide products like MSMA are good options for cotton fields, golf courses, sod farms, and highway right-of-ways, but cannot be legally applied to lawns, pastures or hay ground. This is mostly due to the risk of animal poisoning from being an arsenic-based herbicide.

A multi-year strategy of combining cultural suppression practices and herbicides is necessary. For mor information refer to OSU factsheet PSS-2596 Sandbur Control in Bermudagrass Pastures or visit your local OSU Extension Office.

New World Screwworm: Current Status

Barry Whitworth, DVM
Senior Extension Specialist/BQA State Coordinator, Department of Animal & Food Services, Ferguson College of Agriculture, Oklahoma State University

As of late December, New World Screwworm (NWS), *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, continues to be a significant animal and human health issue in Central America and Mexico. As of December 12, 2025, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (U SDA), over 140,000 animal cases and more than 1,000 human cases have been reported in these countries. The only confirmed NWS case in the United States (US) occurred in a human. The traveler-associated case was confirmed on August 4, 2025, by the CDC in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Health. As of December, the US border with Mexico remains closed to livestock trade.

The USDA continues to monitor the US–Mexico border. NWS fly traps are deployed by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Over 30,000 trapped flies have been analyzed, as well as more than 6,000 wild animals. On November 21, 2025, the USDA reported that NWS has not been detected in animals or traps in the US.

In Mexico, the vast majority of NWS flies remain in the south. A few cases have been found in northern Mexico. According to the USDA, the closest case to the US was approximately 70 miles south of Texas. On December 3, 2025, USDA officials reported a new case of NWS 120 miles south of the Texas border. At the time of this writing, all of the cases found in northern Mexico are longer active.

In a recent audit of the NWS response in Mexico, the USDA reported that progress is being made in controlling NWS. Mexico is conducting outreach and educational programs for livestock producers and is developing emergency response and treatment protocols. They have expanded the workforce and increased surveillance for the parasite. The USDA states that more work is needed but remains committed to implementing the joint NWS action plan.

NWS was eradicated from the US by using the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT). This program is the primary control measure being used in Mexico. Currently, the USDA Panama COPEG facility is producing 100 million sterile flies per week. These flies are being dispersed primarily in southern Mexico. However, a new dispersal facility was recently opened in Tampico, Mexico, which will allow for aerial dispersal in northern Mexico. Additionally, the USDA is investing $21 million to support Mexico's renovation of a fruit fly facility to produce sterile NWS flies.

In the US, the USDA is currently constructing a dispersal facility at Moore Air Force Base in McAllen, Texas. This facility is expected to be operational in early 2026. In addition to the new dispersal facility, the USDA is planning the construction of a new NWS sterile fly production facility in the US.

When NWS was detected in Mexico in November 2024, the US did not have any Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved products for NWS control and prevention. Since then, the FDA has conditionally approved doramectin injection (Dectomax CA-1 injectable solution) for the control and prevention of NWS in cattle. On December 4, 2025, the FDA conditionally approved fluralaner (Exzolt Cattle-CA1) for prevention and treatment of larval infestation by NWS and treatment and control of cattle fever ticks. For cats and dogs, the FDA has conditionally approved lotilaner (Credelio) chewable tablets for the treatment of infestations caused by New World screwworm larvae (myiasis) in dogs and puppies, and lotilaner (Credelio CAT) chewable tablets for the treatment of infestations caused by the same larvae in cats and kittens.

With the start of winter, the spread of NWS into Oklahoma is unlikely. However, when spring arrives, the risk of NWS moving into Oklahoma may increase. Oklahoma livestock producers need to prepare for the possibility of an NWS outbreak. The USDA has recently launched a new website at screwworm.gov. This website contains valuable information such as clinical signs, the parasite's life cycle, treatment and control options, and the latest updates on the current location of NWS. Livestock producers should visit this website frequently to stay up-to-date on the latest information. For additional information about NWS, livestock producer should consult with their local Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension County Agriculture Educator.

Garden Corner

Garden Tips for February

Lawn and Turf

- A product containing glyphosate plus a broadleaf herbicide that are both labeled for this use can be used on **completely tan dormant** bermudagrass in January or early February when temperatures are above 50°F for winter weed control. (HLA-6420)

Tree and Shrubs

- Fertilize trees, including fruit and nut trees and shrubs, according to a soil test. (HLA-6412)
- Most bare-rooted trees and shrubs should be planted in February or March. (HLA-6414)
- Finish pruning shade trees, summer flowering shrubs and hedges. Spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia may be pruned immediately after flowering. **Do not** top trees or prune just for the sake of pruning. (HLA-6409)
- Look for arborvitae aphids on many evergreen shrubs during the warmer days of early spring.
- Gall-producing insects on oaks, pecans, hackberries, etc. need to be sprayed prior to bud break of foliage.
- Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. (HLA-7306)

Flowers

- Force spring flowering branches like forsythia, quince, peach, apple, and weigela for early bloom indoors.
- Forced spring bulbs should begin to bloom indoors; many need 10-12 weeks of cold, dark conditions prior to blooming.
- Feed tulips in early February.
- Wait to prune roses in March

Fruits and Nuts

- Spray peaches and nectarines with a fungicide for prevention of peach leaf curl before bud swell. (EPP-7319)
- Mid-February is a good time to begin pruning and fertilizing trees and small fruits.
- Collect and store graftwood for grafting pecans later this spring.
- Begin planting blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, asparagus, and other perennial garden crops later this month.
- Choose fruit varieties that have a proven track record for Oklahoma's conditions. Fact Sheet HLA-6222 has a recommendation list.

Vegetables

- Cool-season vegetable transplants can still be started for late spring garden planting.
- By February 15 many cool-season vegetables like cabbage, carrots, lettuce, peas, and potatoes can be planted. (HLA-6004)

2026 MAJOR COUNTY JR. LIVESTOCK SHOW SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

Ag Mechanics Projects due Wednesday, January 28 between 9:30am and Friday, January 30 at 12:00pm

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026

County Food Show: entries taken 5:00pm to 6:00pm; judging begins at 6:00pm

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2026

Barns Open to All Animals

Swine weigh-in 5:00pm to 6:00pm

Heifer breeding papers due to office 5:00pm to 6:00pm

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026

Cattle weigh-in 7:00am to 7:30am

Ag Mechanics judging 10:00am

SHOW SCHEDULE:

Beef Showmanship 9:00am

Senior Showmanship, followed by Intermediate Showmanship then Junior Showmanship

Cattle Show; Heifers followed by Steers

Swine Show 1 hour after the conclusion of the Cattle Show

Senior Showmanship, followed by Intermediate Showmanship then Junior Showmanship

Swine; Gilts followed by Barrows

Goats Weigh-ins 4:00pm to 5:00pm

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026

SHOW SCHEDULE:

Goat Showmanship 9:00am

Senior Showmanship, followed by Intermediate Showmanship then Junior Showmanship

Goat Show; Does, followed by Wethers

Sheep Weigh-ins 12:30pm to 1:00pm

Sheep Showmanship 2:00pm

Senior Showmanship, followed by Intermediate Showmanship then Junior Showmanship

Sheep Show; Ewes, followed by Wethers

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2026

Michelle Nichols Awards Interviews 4:00pm to 6:00pm

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026

Major County Bonus Auction 5:30pm

FARM FORWARD:

ENHANCING YOUR RANGE AND HERD

ONE DAY CONFERENCE

Join us for a full day of education focused on profitable, sustainable, and low-input agricultural practices that promote soil health and long-term productivity.

EVENT MADE POSSIBLE BY OUR MANY SPONSORS INCLUDING TITLE SPONSOR:

FAIRVIEW FARM & RANCH

GUEST SPEAKERS

- Kit Pharo, Pharo Cattle Company
- NRCS Representative, regenerative range planning
- Halter Virtual Fence, lunch keynote
- Afternoon in the Field with Pharo/NRCS/Rainfall Simulator

EARLY-BIRD REGISTRATION - BY FEB. 19TH

$25.00
MAJOR CO. , OK PRODUCERS

$50.00
OUT OF COUNTY PRODUCERS

FULL DAY EVENT: BREAKFAST/LUNCH AND TRANSPORTATION TO FIELD PROVIDED

MARCH 5, 2026: 7:30 AM TO 4:30 PM

FAIRVIEW COMMUNITY CENTER, 206 E. BROADWAY, FAIRVIEW, OK

RSVP BY FEB. 19: www.farmforwardok.com 580.227.2512 info@farmforwardok.com

DAY-OF COST: $75

Major County OSU Extension Center
500 E. Broadway, Courthouse Suite 3
Fairview, Oklahoma 73737

MAJOR COUNTY EXTENSION

Newsletter Editor:

Andrea Perkins
Extension Educator
Agriculture / 4-H Youth Development
Email: andrea.perkins10@okstate.edu

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions. For more information, visit https://eeo.okstate.edu.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President for Agricultural Programs and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of $25.50.