OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Second Quarter 2026 Issue
Quarterly Agriculture Newsletter

AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

Challenges Ahead for Oklahoma Farms

Alberto Amador, West Area Ag Economics Specialist

It seems that the first quarter of 2026 is bringing several challenges for farmers and ranchers. Geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East have impacted both agricultural commodities and energy markets, affecting Oklahoma's food production and farm profitability. Weather, like every year, is another relevant factor that should be closely monitored. Recently, some forecasts suggest a high possibility of a fast transition from La Niña to El Niño. Let's analyze how these factors may impact farms in Oklahoma.

To begin with, let's analyze all the implications the Middle East conflict has caused. The attacks have brought high risk for shipping and transportation, especially through the Strait of Hormuz, where energy and fertilizer products are transported to their destination. Approximately 20% of the world's oil and natural gas transit across the Strait and the Gulf. As a result, fuel prices increase, but this also triggers effects on other industries such as fertilizers. Natural gas is a crucial input for nitrogen fertilizers, so cost of production has increased. Additionally, beyond the Strait of Hormuz, Middle Eastern countries play a key role in global fertilizer production. Interruptions in trade flows and constrained input availability could result in the shutdown of refineries and fertilizers plants in the region. According to RaboBank, the region accounts for 44% of global urea exports, 27% of global ammonia exports, 25% of global phosphate fertilizer exports, 36% of global phosphate rock exports, 47% of global sulfur exports and 9% of global potash exports.

After the conflict began in the first week of March, retail fertilizer prices tracker by DTN showed discrepancies in seven of the eight principal fertilizers. The largest increases were urea and anhydrous ammonia by 2.3% and 3.5% respectively, while DAP decreased by 0.4% and 10-34-0 fell 0.3%. The nitrogen fertilizers rose due to constraint in global supply. The U.S. doesn't rely on nitrogen imports as much as it does on potassium. For this reason, we should expect increase in

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

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potassium fertilizer prices, especially for spring production.

Weather is a crucial factor that is analyzed each year. During the first months of 2026, La Niña effects have been present, and some forecasts have suggested a possible fast transition to El Niño this year. If that occurs, the chance of a dry spring is high (currently some areas are in drought). While dryness allows field preparation for spring crops, it can impact wheat yield, and summer precipitation could be volatile, with periods of good rain but short dry intervals. As a consequence, estimated production may decrease and prices 0may rise.

Regarding wheat, both the geopolitical conflict and a faster transition to El Niño are causing shifts in prices. The Middle East situation has already affected wheat prices. After the conflicts began, future prices for the July contract are above $600/cwt, although how long these high prices last will depend on how long the war continues. So far, global and domestic demand remain constant. Therefore, weather risks, including drought in spring, threaten the expected wheat production. High prices may look positive for producers, but it's important to remember that these are only speculations, and the duration of high prices is uncertain. Even though wheat is not facing high fertilizer prices, high fuel costs for harvesting and the quality of the crop during grain filling in spring are risks that should be considered.

In contrast, spring crops, hay and pasture are more vulnerable to the rising production costs. Fertilizers, fuel and repair and maintenance costs are all trending upward. This year seems to be under a multifactorial and complex umbrella, with expensive fertilizers, the chance of drought in spring and no constant precipitation in summer. Good timing for planting dates and applying fertilizers could be key for good results. I suggest analyzing and calculating costs for different kinds of tillage and comparing the overall cost-benefit. Finally, for ranchers adjusting stocking rates depending on summer conditions and considering economic costs for hay, especially for nutrition, are important management actions to consider.

In scenarios like this, decision-making becomes more complex, as conditions rarely optimal and timing for inputs or key operation may not align with original plans. While current forecasts suggest potential risks, outcomes remain uncertain and conditions may change. This year may require a flexible approach, where producers adjust decisions based on evolving weather patterns and market signals. Prioritizing key areas such as input use, planting timing, and forage management can help improve results. Developing a business plan and using available resources can also help reduce exposure to risk.

Getting Started with Small Ruminants Series Update

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 has three meeting dates left. The next meeting is on April 30, 2026, at 6:00 pm at the Major County Fairgrounds in Fairview. A meal will be provided at each meeting. Some topics that will be covered at the meetings are reproduction, rotational grazing, famacha scoring, and guardian dogs.

GETTING STARTED WITH

SMALL RUMINANTS

SERIES

APRIL 30, 2026 6PM
Major County-Fairgounds

JULY 16, 2026 6PM
Woods County-NW Tech

OCTOBER 22, 2026 6PM
Alfalfa County-Fairgrounds

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

MAJOR COUNTY EXTENSION

ALFALFA 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.

Unwanted Pesticide Disposals

The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) and OSU Pesticide Safety Education Program are teaming up once again to offer the opportunity for applicators, farmers, or citizens to properly dispose of any unwanted pesticides. ODAFF funds this Unwanted Pesticide Disposal Program to provide a free service to prevent unlawful disposal of pesticides.

The first event this year will be in Sallisaw at the Sequoyah County Fairgrounds on April 28, 2026. The second event will be in Chandler at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds on April 29, 2026. The third event will be in Cheyenne at the Roger Mills County Fairgrounds on April 30, 2026. If there are any future events they will be posted on the OSU Pesticide Safety Education webpage, www.PestEd.okstate.edu.

Oklahoma commercial and non-commercial applicators and pesticide dealers may participate. Oklahoma farmers, ranchers, and homeowners can use this program as well. There is no cost for the first 2,000 pounds of pesticides brought in by a participant. Anything more than 2,000 pounds will be charged to the participant.

Applicators, homeowners, farmers, and ranchers are not required to pre-register. Dealers are asked to voluntarily pre-register with the OSU Pesticide Safety Education Program. Dealers are asked to pre-register to allow the hazardous waste company to properly plan for larger quantities.

Transportation of pesticides to these events is the responsibility of the participants. Wearing appropriate personal protection equipment is always recommended when handling pesticides. Inspect all unwanted pesticides to see that they are securely packaged. Do not transport pesticides in areas occupied by passengers. Lining the storage area or trunk with plastic sheeting is a good practice to prevent spillage. Containers 5 gallons or smaller can be placed in a bucket or plastic storage container if they show signs of leakage.

The Unwanted Pesticide Disposal Program has been very successful. Since 2006, this program has collected almost 1.6 million pounds of unwanted pesticides. The program is a service designed to remove unusable pesticides from storage and reduce the potential threat to public health and the environment and participants in the program will not be prosecuted for illegal management practices.

External Parasites in Backyard Poultry

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

According to the 11th edition of *Poultry Diseases*, external parasites of poultry are arthropods that live on or in the skin and feathers. Essentially, parasites are freeloaders that live at the expense of the host. Backyard birds are infested with a variety of pests. Ticks, fleas, mites, and lice are some of the most common external parasites found in chickens, turkeys, and ducks. Several of these parasites are bloodsuckers. If not controlled, they can cause weight loss, decreased egg production, unthriftiness, and death in severe cases.

According to a study conducted by Dr. Amy Murillo and associates in California, the most common external parasites in backyard flocks were lice, fleas, and mites. Lice were the most frequently observed parasites, with the chicken body louse (*Menacanthus stramineus*) found on half of the premises inspected. The fluff louse (*Goniocotes gallinae*) was found in 35% of operations. The wing louse (*Lipeurus caponis*) and sticktight flea (*Echidnophaga gallinacea*) were present in 20 % of flocks. Northern fowl mites (*Ornithonyssus sylviarum*), which are the most common mites found in commercial poultry operations, were detected in only 15% of flocks. However, the survey was conducted in the summer, which may have influenced the low number of northern fowl mites, since they are most active in the winter.

Birds infested with external parasites often become agitated due to skin irritation. They will spend more time preening and scratching. Their feathers may become damaged, and they may appear unhealthy. Birds showing these signs should be examined.

When examining birds for external parasites, producers should focus on the breast, back, head, vent region, and wings. Lice may be found on different parts of the body. They are yellowish in color and lie flat against the skin. Their eggs are typically found attached to the shafts of feathers. The vent area is the primary location to check for mite infestations and may appear “dirty.” Sticktight fleas are usually found embedded in the comb.

Birds should be monitored regularly. When producers are unable to examine all birds, they should focus on the young, the old, and any bird that appears unhealthy. The coop should also be inspected. Producers should examine the bedding, walls, and roosts, with close attention given to crevices and cracks where pests may hide.

Before parasite control can begin, the parasite must be correctly identified. Producers can use books or other publications for this purpose, or they may consult a veterinarian. Contacting the local Oklahoma State University Extension office is also a useful option. An agricultural extension educator may be able to identify the pest or submit samples to the Plant Disease and Insect Diagnostic Laboratory at Oklahoma State University for identification.

Poultry continued from page 5

Selecting the proper pesticide and using it correctly is essential. Many pests described in this article can be controlled with appropriate pesticides; however, their eggs are not killed, which requires repeated applications to target newly hatched larvae. Producers should read and follow pesticide label directions.

Alternative methods for external parasite control are also available such as providing diatomaceous earth mixed with sand for dust bathing or using sulfur bags to control mites and lice. For more information on these methods, see references below.

Finally, early identification and treatment greatly increase the chances of successful control. If infestations are allowed to become established, control becomes much more difficult.

For more information on external parasites in backyard poultry, producers may visit https://www.veterinaryentomology.org/ or contact their local veterinarian or Oklahoma State University County Agriculture Extension Educator.

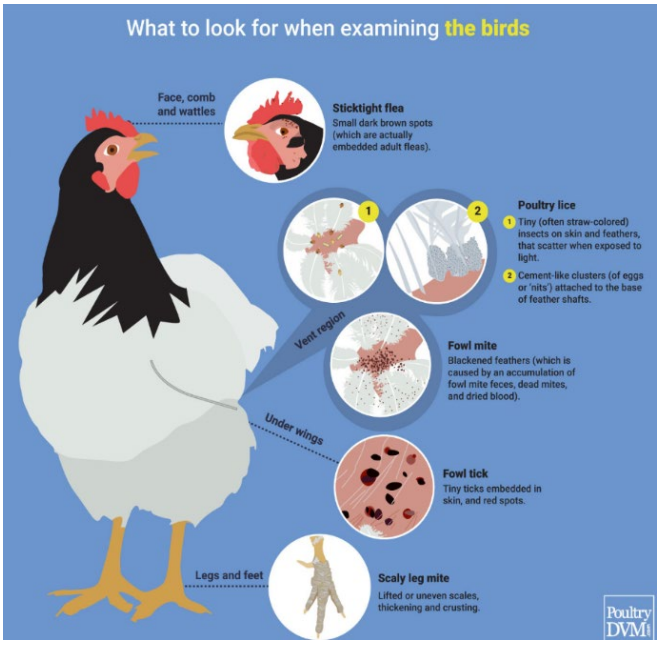
References

Arends, J., J. (2003). External parasites and poultry pests. Diseases of Poultry. 11th Edition.

Murillo, A. C., & Mullens, B. A. (2016). Diversity and Prevalence of Ectoparasites on Backyard Chicken Flocks in California. *Journal of medical entomology*, *53*(3), 707–71.

Murillo, A. C., & Mullens, B. A. (2016). Timing Diatomaceous Earth-Filled Dustbox Use for Management of Northern Fowl Mites (Acari: Macronyssidae) in Cage-Free Poultry Systems. *Journal of economic entomology*, *109*(6), 2572–2579.

Murrillo, A.C., Mullens, B.A. (2016). Sulfur Dust Bag: A Novel Technique for Ectoparasite Control in Poultry Systems: Journal of Economic Entomology, 109(5), 2016, 2229-2233.



Garden Corner

Garden Tips for Mid – to Late April

Flower Beds

- Most bedding plants, summer flowering bulbs, and annual flower seeds can be planted after danger of frost. This happens around mid-April in most of Oklahoma. Hold off on mulching these crops until spring rains subside and soil temperatures are in the low to mid 60s.
- Harden off transplants outside in partial protection from sun and wind prior to planting.
- Lace bugs, aphids, spider mites, bagworms, etc. can start popping up in the landscape during the later part of April. Keep a close eye on all plants and use mechanical, cultural, and biological control options first.
- Let spring flowering bulb foliage (daffodil, tulip, etc.) remain as long as possible before removing it.
- Pinch back leggy annuals to encourage branching and fuller growth.
- Water newly planted annuals frequently until established, then transition to deeper, less frequent water.
- Be alert for both insect pests and predators. Some pests can be handpicked without using a pesticide. Do not spray if predators such as lady beetles are present. Spray only when there are too few predators to be effective.
- Nutsedge plants can become visible during this month but wait until May for treatment.

Vegetables

- Transition from cool-season crops to warm-season crops as temperatures rise.
- Cucurbit crops and okra can be planted towards the end of April.
- Cover cucurbit crops with a floating row cover to keep out insect pests. Remove during bloom time to allow for insect pollination.
- Apply fertilizer according to soil test results.
- Incorporate compost or other organic matter into vegetable garden beds for improved soil health.
- Pay close attention to the forecast and look for potential late freezes. The
- Plant vegetable crops in successive plantings to ensure a steady supply of produce rather than harvesting all at once.
- Watch for cutworm damage and add flea beetle scouting to your list of activities in the vegetables garden.

General

- Hummingbirds arrive in Oklahoma in early April. Get your feeders ready using 1-part sugar to 4-parts water. Do not use red food coloring.
- Keep the bird feeder filled during the summer and help control insects at the same time.
- Schedule a group tour of the OKG Studio Gardens in Stillwater between the first of May and late October!
- Clean out the water garden and prepare for season. Divide and repot water garden plants.
- Begin feeding fish when water temperatures are over 50 F.

TRACTOR & MACHINERY OPERATORS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

DESIGNED TO MEET LABOR REQUIREMENTS FOR 14 AND 15 YEAR OLD YOUTH

****INDIVIDUALS OF ALL AGES MAY ATTEND****

MAY 18TH, 2026 9AM-5PM
MAY 19TH, 2026 9AM-5PM
MAY 20TH, 2026 9AM-5PM

AT THE ALFALFA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
602 WEST 5TH STREET
CHEROKEE, OK 73728

COST $40.00 PAYABLE TO THE ALFALFA COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE

PRE-REGISTRATION BY MAY 12TH, 2026 IS REQUIRED

BE SAFE - BE CERTIFIED

For more information contact:
Erin Metcalf at the Alfalfa County Extension office (580)596-3131
Katy Hittle at the Woods Co Extension Office (580)327-2786
Emily Franke at the Grant Co Extension Office (580)395-2134
Andrea Perkins at the Major Co Extension Office (580)227-3786
Hagen Puentes at the Blaine Co Extension Office (580)623-5195

JOHN DEERE | WESTERN EQUIPMENT

OSU

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.

EXTENSION

AG RESEARCH

2026 OSU Wheat Variety Testing Plot Tours

All times are subject to change due to environmental conditions - please call the County Extension Office to confirm date, time, and location.

Date	Location	Time	Cooperator	County Extension Educator	Extension Office Number	Notes
20-Apr	Walters *(DP)*	10:00 AM	Jimmy Kinder	Kimbreley Davis	580-875-3136	Replicated plot, 2 CEUs
21-Apr	Altus[1]	10:00 AM	OSU Southwest Res. & Ext. Center	Halee Salmon	580-477-7962	Replicated plot
24-Apr	Chickasha *(IM vs SM)* [2]	8:00 AM	OSU South Central Res. Station	Michael Pettijohn	405-224-4476	Replicated plot
29-Apr	Apache *(IM)*	*call office*	Bryan Vail	Dakota Gardner	405-247-3376	Replicated plot, 1 CEU
1-May	El Reno *(DP vs GO)*	8:30 AM	Jerry Lingo	Kyle Worthington	405-262-0155	Replicated plot
6-May	Alva	9:00 AM	Joe Shirley	Katy Hittle	580-327-2786	Replicated plot
6-May	Cherokee	6:00 PM	Kenneth Failes	Erin Metcalf	580-596-3131	Replicated plot
6-May	Weatherford	*call office*	Wheeler Bros.	Larry Bryen	580-323-2291	Demo plot
7-May	Greenfield[3]	12:00 PM	Keith Strack	Hagen Puentes	580-623-5195	Demo Plot
8-May	Custer City	*call office*	Custer City COOP	Larry Bryen	580-323-2291	Demo plot
11-May	Kildare[4]	8:00 AM	Don Schieber	MacKinzie Overman	580-362-3194	Demo plot
13-May	Homestead	6:00 PM	Brook Strader's Farms	Andrea Perkins	580-227-3786	Demo Plot
14-May	Kingfisher[5]	8:30 AM	Danny Struck & LJ Reherman	Bryan Kennedy	405-375-3822	Demo & Replicated
15-May	Lahoma *(IM vs SM)*	8:00 AM	OSU North Central Res. Station	Josh Bushong	580-237-7677	Replicated plot
19-May	Balko	4:00 PM	Teryl Rorabaugh	Loren Sizelove	580-625-3464	Replicated plot, 2 CEUs
20-May	Hooker Irrigated and Dryland	9:00 AM	Ernest and Dan Herald	Lisa McBride	580-338-7300	Replicated plot
22-May	Miami[6]	10:00 AM	Rendel Farms	Reba Palmer	918-542-1688	Replicated plot

Notes

Abbreviations:
TBD: To be decided
DP = Dual-purpose
GO = Grain-only
IM =Intensive management
SM = Standard management

1 Lunch provided after the plot tour at Altus Research Station. Topics: wheat varieties and agronomic characteristics, weed management, and soil fertility.
2 Topics: wheat variety characteristics, OSU elite lines, forage species comparison, and dual-purpose, grain-only, and graze-out wheat management.
3 Lunch at Wheeler Bros followed by plot tour
4 Breakfast at Don's shed, followed by plot tour
5 Breakfast at Fairgrounds, plot tours after
6 Topics: soft wheat variety trials, on-farm planting date × seeding rate research, OSU soft wheat experimental lines and breeding strategies, and soybean management.

Stay connected with OSU Wheat!

Text **WHEAT** to **(855) 452-0489**
to receive updates from the OSU
Wheat Text Group

By texting to this number, you agree to receive wheat updates.
Text STOP to unsubscribe or HELP for help. Msg&Data rates may apply.

MAJOR COUNTY EXTENSION

Newsletter Editor:

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

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