



Time for Summer Crops

Josh Bushong, West Area Extension Crops Specialist

Without a doubt, the wheat crop is going to be short this year. Farmers are already making plans and getting some summer crop established. Corn, soybean, grain sorghum, feed, and sesame usually get mentioned the most. In addition to having fewer wheat bushels to harvest, there is also going to be less wheat made into hay. Instead of looking for a summer grain crop, several farmers are looking towards a feed crop to hay.

While driving throughout north central Oklahoma last week, I noticed significant acres of wheat that will not be taken to grain. A few wheat fields have already been laid down for hay and I assume more will soon be too. There have also been a few wheat fields already chemically burned down in preparation of a summer crop. With the soil profile depleted, significant rains will be critical for establishment and production.

Some corn and soybean planting has already started, and many more acres will follow. Mid to late May planted soybeans have shown to be relatively consistent for many in the region the past five or so years. We have favorable soil temperatures to favor good germination, but soil moisture at planting depth is hard to find for most.

Inadequate weed control is one of the most yield-limiting factors, as some research has shown yield losses as high as 79%. Certain herbicide programs may seem expensive but can still be economical if yields are protected. From soybean emergence to the V3 growth stage (third trifoliolate) is the most critical period to limit weed competition to protect yield potential.

As always, we recommend soybean producers to rely on residual herbicides instead of solely relying on traits that allow the postemergence applications of glyphosate, glufosinate, 2,4-D (Enlist) or dicamba (Xtend). ALS herbicides (such as Classic, FirstRate, and Pursuit) have good activity on many broadleaf weeds but can be weak on pigweeds and waterhemp. PPO herbicides (such as Cadet, Cobra, Reflex, Resource, and UltraBlazer) have activity on many problem broadleaf weeds and have also been a good option if some weeds are suspect of ALS resistance. Assure II, Fusilade DX, Poast and Select are some good options if grass control is needed.

Recent field trials by OSU have shown that pairing preemergent herbicides with postemergent herbicides resulted in higher yields (about 10-15 more bushels) and fewer

weeds. These trials looked at planting date and postemergence application timings with and without a preemergence. Later planted soybeans generally benefited more from the pairing of a preemergence and postemergence.

To save yield potential, it is best to start clean and stay weed-free for the first few weeks of crop growth. Soybean producers must first decide which herbicide traits is best for their operation, develop a herbicide plan, and also make a backup plan if herbicide applications are delayed or fail satisfactory control. Weed control strategies need to consider future crop rotations and should also be a long term investment in managing herbicide resistant weeds. Going cheap now may become much more expensive later.

With grain sorghum and feed crops, such as forage sorghums, sudangrass, and sorghum sudans, some of the same principles apply. The main plan should start clean of weeds, use residual products, and use postemergence products if needed until the crop can canopy over to shade out later emerging weeds. Group 15 herbicides, such as Dual, Bicep, Warrant, etc., are good options for residual control of many grasses and small seeded broadleaves. If a group 15 herbicide is used make sure to use safened seed, such as Concept treated, to prevent herbicide injury to the crop.

Contact your local OSU County Extension office with any questions about crop options and herbicide options for your farming operation.



Finishing a Beef: Where to Start?

Dana Zook, West Area Extension Livestock Specialist

Consumer interest in locally raised beef has remained high since the supply interruptions that Covid-19 brought to our nation's beef supply. This section of the industry is booming as both current and new beef producers take a step into the home-raised beef business. Regardless of experience level, there is great research out there that can help boost our knowledge of the best way to finish cattle on a small scale. A plethora of information can be overwhelming so where should one start?

The first thing to do is create a plan. This can sound boring but besides the capital to purchase the animal, the bulk of the costs will come from nutrition. Nutrition takes planning. As a member of a Nebraska farming family, we always kept some of our corn crop back for various livestock feeding needs. That is not a luxury that most Oklahoma farmers and ranchers have, and most will look to co-ops or feed dealers for livestock nutrition needs. That being said, there are some excellent nutrition options for finishing cattle from the retailers around the state. Make sure you are shopping around for prices

and quiz the sales men and women on the nutrient content of their products. They may even have suggestions on a custom ration that will work well for your situation.

The actual nutritional content of your finishing ration will vary depending on the length of your finishing period, the size of the animal and the type of finishing production system (grain or grass fed). For example, let's consider two calves that are expected to finish at 1,200 pounds. A weaned 660 lb. calf expected to gain 3.0 pounds daily will need a starting ration containing 13% protein, 70% TDN (our measure of energy). Alternatively, a much larger 960-pound calf will need 11-12% protein while still maintaining that energy level. As the example shows, much of the gain is about the volume that a calf can consume. The smaller calf has some growing to do and can't eat as much as the larger calf which makes a more nutrient dense ration necessary.

Another item on your to-do list is to determine and evaluate a forage source. Don't forget, every OSU extension office can send off forage samples for analysis for minimum cost. Knowing the quality of your forage source is important for proper ration balancing. With good management, the level of forage in a finishing ration will be around 15% once animals are adapted to the final finishing ration. A 21-day adaptation to the finishing diet is industry standard. Slow adaption to grain diets is key for animal health and efficiency during the entire finishing phase.



Forage-finished animals will have much different plane of nutrition. Forage based finishing systems may require significant acreage of different forage types to maximize calf growth throughout the year. To enhance daily gain, forage finished systems should utilize a combination of legumes, perennial grass, annual grasses and brassicas. Even with good forage management, high quality hay is often necessary in the winter to maintain gain for these animals. Keep in mind, daily gain and final finished weight of grass-fed cattle will often be much less than grain fed animals.

Most of the complexity of finishing an animal is about adapting them to the ration you have chosen and keeping them healthy, so they don't go off-feed or have nutritional upset. Balancing the forage and grain components along with the size of the animal to match the length of the finishing period will take a bit of expertise and knowledge of nutrition. If you have any questions about nutrition and management of home-raised beef, contact your local OSU county extension office for assistance.

This information was adapted from two OSU factsheets on finishing beef which can be found at <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/>



Extension Experience – Insights into Oklahoma Agriculture

The Northwest Area Extension Staff would like to announce the creation of our new podcast *Extension Experience*. The *Extension Experience* podcast is brought to you by Josh Bushong and Dana Zook. Each week they provide perspective on Agriculture topics and offer insight from our experience working with Extension Educators and Producers across Oklahoma.

The *Extension Experience* podcast is available on Spotify, Google Podcasts, and Apple Podcast platforms. You can also access the episodes on spotlight, <http://spotlight.okstate.edu/experience/podcast/>

We hope you consider listening to *Extension Experience*.



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