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FEEDING LIVESTOCK THIS WINTER

BY: ADELE GELVIN, JULIE WALKER & MAURICE
LEMKE

Finding the least costly ration is challenging in good years. Drought adds additional barriers to developing low cost winter feed rations with desired animal performance. Starting with the basis there are several factors that influence an animal's nutrient requirements such as age, environmental conditions, stage of production and desired gain. You have a few options when we consider the cow herd. The feeds and equipment available will determine what your cow's ration will look like.

The two basic strategies for getting cows through the winter in good condition are 1) full forage diet plus supplements as needed or 2) limit-feeding. Both of these systems work as long as the animal's nutrient requirements are met. Many producers are considering some type of limit-feeding this year because of shortages in available forages. Typically one pound of a non-forage feeds such as corn, dry distiller grain, soybean hulls, and oats replaces more than one pound of forages. The amount depends on the quality of forage and re-

placement feed.

If you select to winter feed your cows with full forage diet or limit-feeding, it is important to test your forages which allows the rations to be formulated to ensure that the animal's nutrient requirements are met. It is not possible to guess the nutrient content of a forage or feedstuff with your eye. It is recommended that feeds are tested each year because there are different growing conditions each year especially with drought conditions or purchasing forage.

Limit feeding requires a minimal amount of forage (roughage) to maintain rumen function. The general rule is that cows should receive at least 0.5% of their body weight as hay or silage. Therefore, a 1400 pound cow should receive at least 7 pounds of roughage per day. When feeding rations limited in forages, it is critical to remember to adapt the cattle to the ration over a period of 7 to 10 days, because the ration is typically a high-grain diet and may cause digestive upset.

Limit-feeding is a restriction on the amount of feeds consumed by cattle; however, diets are formulated to meet the nutrient requirements of the animals. Cattle may appear gaunt and behave as though they are hungry for the first 2 to 3 weeks as they adapt to the reduction in feed intake. Following the adaptation period the cattle may still appear gaunt.

Another consideration in limit feeding cattle is bunk space. Each cow should have a minimum of 30 inches of bunk space, regardless of the type of feeder. You may be asking if feeding on the ground is an option. Remember that some of the ingredients in a limit-fed ration are better suited to bunk feeding because of their size.

With all the cost already incurred this year due to dry conditions, take some time to develop the least cost ration for your cows. Call your local livestock educator with your questions on how to use various alternative feeds, help develop rations and develop a strategy for your winter feeding program.

Making A Difference

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VALUING RESOURCES AFTER A FIRE

By: Mike Huber

There were numerous fires throughout the region this summer and many farms/ranches lost valuable resources such as grassland, hay land, cropland and shelterbelts. Putting values on those resources can sometimes be very difficult.

Land resources can often be valued by using rental rates or the value of potential production and there are many tools available to help generate those numbers.

However, putting a value on shelterbelts and wooded draws can be a lot more difficult. Trees are an integral part of farms and ranches throughout South Dakota. They provide benefits such as protection from the hot summer sun and cold winter winds. They are a very valuable part of our farm/ranch resources.

There are professional arborists and foresters available that can help you calculate a monetary value. This value can be very important for insurance and tax purposes. There are also some publications available that may be of help in calculating a value, but producers are urged to work with a professional to come up with a fair value.

If you are interested in some of the tools available or a list of professionals that might be available to assist you give us a call.

Source: Ball, John & Kiesz, Aaron. Guidelines for Professional Tree and Landscape Appraisal in South Dakota

PREPARING INFORMATION FOR YOUR LENDER

BY: STACY HADRICK

A lender is probably one of the most important people to your operation. Developing a good relationship is key to having success with your lender. When times are challenging it may be overwhelming to know where to begin to communicate the problems in the operation. Here are some tips on where to begin or a refresher on how to successfully communicate with your lender:

Provide your lender with an accurate set of Financial Statements each year. Balance Sheet, Income Statement, and Cash Flow are important for your information and your lenders. Include improvements made to the property, if you are anticipating a major changes, and projections into the future for

your operation. Maintaining a good set of records shows your lender that your financial and trend history is important to you.

Maintain good communication & build trust with your lender. Tell them if your plans change or if unforeseen problem arise in your operation which may affect your credit needs or interfere with making loan payments on time. Your lender expects you to be open and honest about your operation and you can expect the same from them. Your lender should explain the reasons for the actions they have taken. If you don't have open communication and trust with your lender, maybe it is time to look for a different one that you feel more comfortable with.

Set Long Range goals for your business and your family. Share with your lender where you are currently at and where you are headed. Show your lender you have confidence in your plans and in yourself. Have those plans well thought out and be able to explain them. Know the cost and benefits. By sharing your plans and goals with your lender he can help you reach them.

Resources from Bryce Richter- Wells Fargo Bank in Sturgis, Ann Mackaben-Farmers State Bank in Faith and *Agri Finance* magazine.



TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT MONEY ISSUES

BY: CALLIE MADDOCK



With the holidays just around the corner you may be hearing from your children what they want for Christmas, or with the cold weather, how they need new snow boots and snow pants. You're not alone if you are over-whelmed by these requests. This past year has been difficult on everyone's pocket books, but here are some ways to help your children understand why they may not be sporting those new snow boots or getting that expensive toy under the Christmas tree this year.

If you are like most adults you are feeling guilty that you are not able to provide everything for your family that they would like. Take time to reflect that you are not in control of your situation. You can't control the weather. But, you are in control in regard to helping your child better understand your financial situation.

Make sure your child knows that this is not their fault. Ask them for their cooperation as you go through some changes. When adults keep information from their children, they open the door for mixed messages, confusion and tension. Kids are able to pick up on things, especially when things are wrong. Remember that if there is a lack of communication and information, children of all ages will naturally "fill in the blanks" themselves, and this is rarely accurate or positive. Be open and honest with your child.

Express in simple words and reassure your child that you are in charge of the problem and they are not. Tell them that no matter what happens that together you and your family can make it through any problem. Keep them informed about progress and what to expect. Remind them of what will stay the same in their lives, such as your home, pets, school and friends. You also need to tell them what will change. That there won't be a vacation, fewer outings, not any new clothes, etc. It may be hard for them to understand, but if you openly communicate with your children, they will better understand the situation.

Source: SDSU Extension Extra, 14065, How to Talk to Your Children About Money Problems

Emergency Erosion Control

BY: David Vander Vliet

Watching your fields blow can be a sickening feeling. As you watch this you know that you are losing money because the erosion is stealing from your future crop yields. The most effective way to prevent wind erosion is to maintain a cover on the surface. This is usually done by leaving crop residue. But what are some options for a producer who have lost residue due to fire, crop failure, or crop removal for forage?

Once soil drifting has started, it is difficult to stop the damage. If you know of spots that are likely to blow or you notice an area starting to blow, prompt action may prevent an entire field from blowing. Basically your two options would be to either cover the soil with straw or manure, or till the soil to roughen the surface.

Mulching can be an effective tool for preventing wind erosion damage. This can be done by putting down straw, hay or corn stalks. Spread the straw evenly and anchor it down using a mulch treader, rotary hoe, a straight running disc, or by using a chisel plow with chisels spaced about 30 inches apart. The residue should be anchored at right angles to the prevailing winds and you should start at the upwind side. The amount of residue needed will vary with the soil texture (see table on next page).

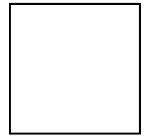
In most instances manure is the preferred erosion aid because it adds fertility and aids in improving soil tilth. Again, depending on the soil type a rate of 15 to 30 tons/acre is required to protect the soil. Spread the manure evenly, and do not work it into the ground. Heavy wet manure will usually hold without any additional anchoring.

The last resort for wind erosion control would be emergency tillage. Tillage, when performed properly, can provide a roughened, cloddy surface resistant to wind erosion. The roughened surface reduces wind speed at the surface and traps the wind-blown soil particles. The most commonly used tool is chisels. Use a chisel with 4 to 6 inch wide sweeps spaced 30 inches apart and operated at a depth of 4 to 5 inches. If you are faced with sandy soils the chisel may not work well. For this type of soil you would use a moldboard lister spaced 40 to 50 inches apart. The first listing should not be more than 4 to 5 inches deep. Later listings, if necessary should be progressively deeper. For either tillage option, provide a sufficient area upwind and till at right angles to the wind. Tractor speed and tillage depth should be varied as needed to bring clods to the surface. The best, most effective clods come from moist soil. Slower travel speeds with tillage implements will build higher ridges and more protection.

Pounds of Residue to Control Wind Erosion on Various Soil Texture	
Soil Texture	Pounds Residue
Sand	2,300
Loamy Sand	1,800
Sandy Loam	1,400
Loam/Sandy Clay Loam	1,150
Silt Loam/Clay Loam	1,050
Silty Clay Loam	950

SNOW FENCES CAN BENEFIT FARM/RANCH WATER SUPPLIES

BY: MIKE HUBER



Summer drought and fires have drastically reduced the amount of natural snow catch we might get from our residual grass. Anything we can do to help snow deposit where we want it is beneficial.

The water supply to some surface water dugouts can be enhanced using effectively placed snow fences. The benefits of snow fences depend on the amount of snowfall. If an area does not receive snowfall, then a snow fence clearly isn't beneficial. However, a single snowstorm, along with a properly placed snow fence, can improve both the water supply and quality of your stock dams.

About 75% of the annual runoff that flows into storage reservoirs is from spring snowmelt. For small water storage reservoirs such as dugouts, the water supply is almost entirely based on snowmelt runoff.

The following guidelines should be considered when establishing a snow fence to ensure the most effective enhancement of water supplies:

Locate the snow fence along the length of the dugout, perpendicular to the prevailing winds, so that the trapped snow is

deposited in the dugout. A large portion of the runoff from melting snowdrifts can be lost to seepage if the drift is located too far from the dugout. In most cases, the direction of the prevailing wind can be determined by observing how snow drifts along fence lines. In cases where an earth spoil pile is located alongside the dugout, the snow fence should be built on top of the spoil pile.

Existing dugouts where the prevailing winds are diagonal to the length of the dugout should have the snow fence placed along two sides of the dugout.

The fetch area (area upwind of the dugout), which is the source of the blowing snow, should be long enough to provide sufficient snow to fill the snow fence.

The snow fence should be 6 to 8 feet high. The height of a snow fence directly affects its storage capacity.

A snow fence with a 50% porosity and constructed of 6 inch boards is most effective. A more porous fence will form shallow, uniform drifts and a denser fence will form shorter drifts. Researchers have found that horizontal boards are 25% more efficient than vertical boards and that six-inch boards with a six-

inch spacing are the most effective. Plastic snow fencing can also be installed on a temporary basis but several rows would be required to get the fence high enough to trap sufficient amounts of snow to fill the dugout.

A gap of 10-15% of the total snow fence height between the ground and the fence should be maintained. A gap at the bottom of a snow fence reduces the tendency of the fences to become buried in drifts, which reduces the fence's storage capacity. Burial of the fence can also cause structural damage to the fence due to the forces exerted by snow settlement and creeping. Too wide a gap, on the other hand, will reduce the storage capacity and efficiency of the snow fence.

On average, 25-30% of our annual precipitation comes in the form of snow. Redistribution of snow by the wind can reduce or increase the effect of this precipitation significantly. As a result, the effective trapping of snow with snow fences can be very beneficial in securing a water supply.

Source: Yarotski, Jim. Snow Fences Can Benefit Farm Water Supplies

INCORPORATING HIGH NITRATE FEEDS INTO YOUR WINTER FEEDING PROGRAMS

BY: ADELE GELVIN, JULIE WALKER & MAURICE LEMKE

We need to be aware of nitrate values in feeds. When normal plant growth is stressed or altered due to environmental conditions such as drought, testing forages for nitrates is very important. The question often asked is, “Can high nitrate feeds can be incorporated into a ration?”, and we are glad to tell you the answer is yes. However, there are several considerations that need to be taken.

1. When formulating diets with high nitrate feeds, pay attention to the total dietary nitrate concentration. You need to know the nitrate content of all the feeds and do not forget your water source.

2. Rations need to be balanced for nutrients, determining the safe amount of high nitrate feeds does not ensure that the ration is balanced for desired animal performance.
3. Make sure the animals consume a mixture of the low and high nitrate feeds. Ideally a total mixed ration is preferred, so each bite is a balance of high and low nitrate feeds.
4. Don't start your animals at the maximum safe amount; gradually increase the amount of high nitrate feed into the diet.
5. Pregnant cows can be very sensitive to nitrates. So, use

the high nitrate feeds on non-pregnant animals or during early gestation.

Testing of forages should occur when forages are in the bale. The nitrate test results can change until the forage is harvested. Corn silage samples should be taken after it has gone through the normal fermentation process.

Two excellent resources are ExEx 2034 “Incorporating High Nitrate Feeds Into Feeding Programs” and ExEx 4015 “Nitrate Poisoning of Livestock: Causes and Prevention”.

Guide For Nitrate Levels In Mature Cattle

Percentage nitrate ion (NO ₃ -) (dry matter basis)	Content of nitrate nitrogen (dry matter basis)		Comments
	Percentage	ppm ³	
Less than 0.44	0.0 - 0.10	0 -1,000	Safe to feed if adequate feed and water are available
0.44 - 0.66	0.1 - 0.15	1,000 - 1,500	Safe for non-pregnant animals. Limit to 50% of total ration dry matter for pregnant animals; animals may go off feed, have a slow drop in production, some abortions are possible.
0.66 - 0.88	0.15 - 0.20	1,500 - 2,000	Limit to 50% of total ration dry matter for all animals; may experience some symptoms, possibly death.
0.88 - 1.54	0.20 - 0.35	2,000 - 3,500	Limit to 35 to 40% total ration dry matter. Do not feed to pregnant animals.
1.54 - 1.76	0.35 - 0.40	3,500 - 4,000	Limit to 25% total ration dry matter. Do not feed to pregnant animals.
Greater than 1.76	Greater than 0.40	Greater than 4,000	Toxic. DO NOT FEED.

RANGE WILDFIRE RECOVERY...

BY: ROGER GATES, SDSU RANGE MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST

In the grip of drought, livestock producers often may be forced to deal with the additional impact of wildfire. While the threat of drought conditions develops gradually, and can be anticipated, losses due to wildfire are sudden and devastating.

Because fire is a natural component of Northern Great Plains grassland ecosystems, prairie vegetation is very well adapted to recover following a fire. Unfortunately, several of the conditions that can make fire a beneficial management tool with prescribed burning are absent in many wildfires. A fire prescription or burn plan designed to reduce one species or group and encourage another would include specific conditions such as a target fuel load, favorable growing conditions, good moisture and acceptable wind speed, wind direction and relative humidity. These conditions most often exist early in the growing season. If prescribed conditions are not met, the burn is not conducted. In contrast, wildfires occur when conditions may be very unfavorable for vegetation.

Wildfire impacts both components of the soil-plant complex. Under normal conditions, the soil surface is protected by a layer of litter, old plant material undergoing the decay process. This litter layer along with standing vegetation reduce evaporation and serve to protect the surface from soil movement caused by wind or rain. In addition, litter promotes the infiltration of rainwater, reducing runoff and enhancing soil moisture. During winter, standing vegetation is important for snow capture, which later contributes to soil moisture. Standing vegetation and litter are removed, sometimes completely, by a wildfire.

Wildfires also remove whatever live plant tissue was present at the time of the burn. As plants initiate new growth following the fire, to reestablish photosynthetic leaf tissue, they will draw down stored reserves in the same manner that occurs with new growth in the spring. If reserves have not been replenished by the time autumn freezes occur, the plant's reserve status will be compromised and recovery the following spring may be less vigorous.

Although the landscape may appear devastated following a fire, grassland species are adapted to fire – they will recover. In contrast to woodland fires where fuel loads may lead to extended periods of very hot temperatures, grassland fires generally move over individual plants very rapidly, minimizing the duration and intensity of elevated temperatures. The rate of post-fire recovery is controlled primarily by the condition of the vegetation before the fire and moisture conditions following the burn. Healthy, vigorous rangeland will recover rapidly following a fire, just as it does after a drought. Recovery of rangeland vegetation stressed by long term overgrazing will be much slower.

While tame grasses introduced for forage production may be less well adapted to fire, if they have reached dormancy by the time of a summer wildfire, they are unlikely to be severely damaged. With fall moisture and cooler temperatures they should begin re-growth rapidly.

When favorable growing conditions return, the first plants to respond will be annual broadleaves. These weedy species are nature's mechanism to protect the soil surface as rapidly as possible. While this flush of growth is normally transient and will be replaced by perennial plants, land managers must be alert to the invasion of troublesome weeds during the early stages of post-fire recovery. Early treatment of small plants or patches will be much more effective than later treatment of well established weeds.

Best management for rangeland following a burn is rest from grazing. Unfortunately, re-growth following a burn is both palatable and nutritious. Precautions will have to be taken to ensure that livestock are excluded from burned areas for as long as possible. For example, if only a portion of a pasture has burned, a temporary fence to exclude grazing should be established.

The greatest benefit for vegetation following a fire will be a complete growing season rest, perhaps grazing again after vegetation is dormant in the fall. If an area must be grazed, delaying at least until important plants have reached maturity and set seed will be beneficial. Productivity of plants surviving after a fire will be reduced. Stocking rates will need to be adjusted downward, perhaps as much as 50% when grazing is resumed.

While there is a strong desire to "do something" following a fire, there is no evidence that tillage or other soil treatments or reseeding will be of any benefit. In fact some research indicates they can be detrimental. Management following a fire boils down to matching animal demand and feed supply by reducing animal numbers and/or identifying alternative sources of feed. Delaying a return to grazing on burned areas will benefit the vegetation and restore its productivity.

WINTERING WATERING IN WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA

BY: BILL KECK

New comers to the area are often amazed to hear of the need to water lawns, trees and shrubs at this time of year. Neglecting to water during the winter when "Mother Nature" has not given adequate fall moisture often results in the decline and die back of trees and shrubs the following summer.

The result of long, dry periods during fall and winter is injury or death of plant root systems. The plants affected may appear perfectly normal and resume growth in the spring using stored food energy, only to weaken or die in late spring or early summer when stored energy runs out. Weakened plants also may be subject to insect and disease problems later on.

Most woody plants with shallow roots systems require supplemental watering during extended dry fall and winter periods. Included in this group are shade trees such as birch, maples and lindens. Also included are evergreen trees such as Colorado Blue Spruce.

Evergreen shrubs, particularly these growing near the foundation of a house, may suffer root system damage during dry spells. Included are Pfitzer, junipers and mugo pines.

Lawn grasses also are prone to winter damage. Newly established lawns, whether seed or sod, are especially susceptible to damage in dry fall and winter weather. Susceptibility also increases with lawns having south or west exposures.

Watering should be preformed only when air temperatures are above freezing and soil surface is not frozen. It's ok to water even if the ground is frozen 2 or 3 inches below the surface. The water will still penetrate. Apply one half to an inch of water early in the day so that it will have time to soak in before possible freezing occurs during the night. If water freezes around the base of a tree or shrub, it can cause mechanical damage to the bark. Heavy coatings of ice on turf grasses also can cause suffocation or result in matting of the grass.

In most years, one or two good rains, or waterings in late fall (October) and early winter (November) may be enough to keep plants from suffering damage. The most important time for supplemental water is in the fall prior to sub-zero-weather. If dry weather continues, consider watering in January and again February and every thirty days until spring moisture arrives.

In watering, recently planted trees and shrubs, the most important area to water is the distance from a point halfway between the trunk and the outer stretch of the branches to approximately one foot beyond the "drip line" or branch extremities, not at the base. Trees that are established two or more years should be watered with a lawn sprinkler to ensure coverage of all the root area. Roots will extend at least as far as the tree is tall. Even your lawn will benefit as well.

The take home message is, if it's still mild weather, with no snow cover or measurable precipitation forecasted for the next week, get out your hose and do you plants a favor. Happy New Year.

Bill Keck is the South Dakota State University and Pennington County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Educator. Call him at (605) 394-2199 Ext. 112.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS TO SET YOUR HOUSEHOLD IN ORDER

By: Sally Park-Hageman

Each new stage or change in our lives as well as the passing of a year calls for a fresh look at family records and papers kept. Complete records are a key to credit standing, essential in tax preparation, and telling the story of our financial progress. A systematic plan for keeping track of important papers can save hours of anxious searching, help preserve peace and harmony, and make it easier to cope with emergency situations. These are definitely good goals for all of us in 2007!

Record keeping is not merely a matter of neatness and order but includes legal and safety factors. Some records and papers can be kept in home files for ready use. Others should be left in a safe-deposit box or secure location. A good guide is to keep the item at home unless it is a legal document or is difficult to replace or duplicate. Then it should be kept in a safe-deposit box or possibly with your attorney.

Resolution #1: To evaluate the need for storage of all paper to determine which should be discarded and which should be stored and where. Make your decision and file each paper accordingly. Fight the urge to just stack paper and plan to return to the task later. This is the way things get lost and will cause you to waste valuable time searching for them.

Resolution #2: If you have not already done so, develop a location in the home for a home filing system. It doesn't have to be fancy – a cardboard box or drawer may do it. Plan the filing system to meet your needs. You may not need detailed files at the present time. But remember, every type of important paper should be assigned a certain space to be kept until needed.

Resolution #3: Make a booklet or record of what papers you have, where they are stored, your legal consultants, and who should be contacted if you or a family member cannot.

Organization can help de-stress life and allow more time for other endeavors. Happy New Year!

Look Beyond the Holidays to Avoid the January Blahs

By: Ingrid Lindberg

The excitement and activity levels associated with the December holidays often give way to January letdown and a case of the "blahs." Children are even more susceptible than adults to the season's rising excitement and expectations.

Like adults, children experience holiday stress, so it's not unusual that afterwards, some children crash and burn in January. Children can seem moody, and they may suffer from expectations for the season that didn't match reality. Others have gotten used to over stimulation so that they cannot find ways to busy themselves.

Some parents say the post-holiday letdown is almost as if children have been trying so hard to be good that they have stored up several weeks worth of bad behavior, and they want to let it all out at once.

Parents shouldn't overreact. Children don't understand their own after-holiday behavior. They don't plan to be mean and disruptive, but they often can't help themselves. Instead, help children see that there are events and activities to plan for and anticipate in January and beyond.

One wise parent gave her daughter a calendar for Christmas. On New Year's Day, her parent sat down with her and filled in upcoming events. By the time they had marked in her birthday, her brother's birthday, Valentine's Day, school holidays, the church carnival, etc., the little girl was looking forward to the rest of the winter. This seemed to put the winter holidays into perspective.

Maintain year round some of the holiday activities the family enjoys. The fun and frolic often associated with holiday activities can help insulate us from emotional distress. However, when the holidays pass and the activities cease, we may feel disappointed and blue. To help avoid this post-holiday letdown, spread out beyond the holiday period those activities that brought you peace and happiness.

SOURCES OF ALTERNATIVE LIVESTOCK FEEDS

UPDATED 8-25-2006

Barley Malt Sprouts

- Ladish Malting Co./Cargill (Spiritwood, ND)
800-422-1155 ext 22869

Distillers Grains

- Dakota Ethanol (Wentworth, SD)
888-539-2676
<http://www.dakotaethanol.com/feed.html>
- Dakotaland Feeds (Aberdeen and Huron, SD)
800-952-3583
<http://www.dakotalandfeeds.com>
- Dakota Gold Marketing (Chancellor, Groton, Hudson, Loomis (mid-November 2006), Milbank, and Scotland, SD)
888-327-8799
<http://www.dakotagoldmarketing.com>
- Rising Star Feeds (Watertown and Redfield (Spring 2007), SD)
866-788-5907
<http://www.glaciallakesenergy.com/risingstar.htm>
- VeraSun Energy (Aurora, SD)
877-696-8786
<http://www.verasun.com/>

Corn Gluten Feed

- Progold/Cargill (Wahpeton, ND)
800-317-8825

Soyhulls

- South Dakota Soybean Processors (Volga, SD)
888-289-6325
<http://www.sdsbp.com/market.htm>
- ADM – Northern Sun (Enderlin, ND)
800-553-6043

Wheat Middlings

- Dakota Growers (Carrington, ND)
701-652-4815
<http://www.dakotagrowers.com/>
- Horizon Milling/Cargill Malt (Fairmont, ND)
http://www.horizonmilling.com/contact/contact_feedsales.html
800-422-1155
- Noodles by Leonardo (Cando, ND)
952-496-7007
- North Dakota State Mill (Grand Forks, ND)
800-538-7721 ext 7223

NOTE: All of the plants listed for corn gluten feed, soyhulls, and wheat middlings have their products available pelleted.

ESTIMATING COW HERD WINTER FORAGE NEEDS

BY: CLINT CLARK

According to Eric Mousel, Range Livestock Production Specialist for SDSU, cattle producers need to answer two questions when looking to buy hay for their cows for winter: 1) how can I project how much hay I will need to feed my cows this winter and 2) how much will a ton of purchased forage cost me after hauling charges?

Cost of transporting livestock feed has gone up dramatically since the beginning of the year due to high fuel prices. Mousel has developed two simple spread sheet programs, one that helps cattle producers figure cost and amount of forage needed for the feeding period and the other will help you calculate forage cost/ton after freight charges. You can access these spreadsheets at: <http://ars.sdstate.edu/faculty/Mousel.htm> and click on "Winter Feed Cost Calculator" or you can contact your local extension office to get a copy of the spreadsheets.

When using Mousel's "Winter Feed Calculator", you are allowed to change cow body weight, number of cows in the herd, and the price/ton of feed. This will give the producer an estimated amount of feed needed and cost, excluding freight.

In the "Freight Calculator", producers will have the option of changing the freight charge, number of miles and cost of forage, giving them the cost/ton of forage and freight.

DISEASE RISK MANAGEMENT, ARE YOU PREPARED?

BY: ADELE GELVIN

All too often disease risk management is overlooked, but it should be an area that all livestock producers are aware of. Through education and awareness, livestock producers can help protect themselves and their livelihood. Below are a few questions that you as a producer should ask yourself to determine whether you are taking necessary precautions to keep yourself and your assets protected.

1. Do you limit access to your farm?
2. Do you maintain fences to keep your animals in and others out?
3. Do you require that employees that have contact with livestock at other locations (including their own home) use strict biosecurity measures while on your farm (e.g. provide them with clean boots and coveralls to wear)?
4. Do you maintain thorough and accurate records of animal movement?
5. Do you monitor and inspect animals for signs of illness at least daily?
6. Do you clean equipment, change clothing, and change or clean boots when handling animals from groups with different health status?
7. Do you limit the frequency and number of new introductions?
8. When animals are off your farm, do you prevent reproductive contact with animals from other herds?
9. Do you immediately isolate sick animals from the herd to minimize disease risk?
10. Do you ensure that all calves ingest adequate amounts of disease-free colostrum within the first 6 hours of life?

More information will be available for livestock producers to understand and help prevent the transmission of domestic and foreign animal diseases throughout their herd. If you are interested in more information prior to the meetings, please contact your local SDSU Livestock Extension Educator.

FALL SOIL TESTING METHODS...

BY: DAVID VANDER VLIET



One of the big pushes after a drought is to make sure you soil sample to check what nutrients are still in the field. For many they will find they do not have to add much fertilizer because most of the nutrients from the previous year are still available.

Soil testing is your best way to evaluate the fertility status of a field or of areas within a field. When you send a sample off to the laboratory for plant-available nutrient analysis, a good soil sample that adequately represents your field or area gives you good representative results. A poor sample will only lead to an analysis of limited value and be a waste of your time and money.

The volume of the soil sample you will send in shrinks at each step from field to laboratory. Thus, it is imperative to start with a representative sample from the field. Depth of sampling, timing of sampling, equipment, sample handling, and sampling procedures all have an effect on a good representative soil sample.

When sampling your fields the traditional method is to do the whole field. This method consists of taking 15 random samples and mixing them together. This method is quick, relatively inexpensive, and fairly reproducible. You do want to avoid taking samples from unusual areas. This may be from locations that have had more manure applied when compared to other locations in the field or if you have merged fields to form a larger field. A drawback to whole field sampling is that it does not help determine if there is substantial nutrient variability. This can result in over- or under- fertilization on large areas of the field. These variations can be determined by other soil sampling methods. These are explained in SDSU Fact Sheet 935, "Recommended Soil Sampling Methods for South Dakota."

The timing of when the sample is taken can have an affect on the nitrogen and sulfur readings. Soil biological activity affects these nutrients soil test levels. Therefore, if you sample in the fall, it is recommended to wait until after soil temperatures are below 50° F. At this point nutrient releases normally become negligible.

Soil sample depth is important depending on the nutrients you are interested in. For most producers the 0-24 inch sample is needed. This sample will need to be split into a 0-6 inch sample and a 6-24 inch sample. The 0-6 inch sample is recommended for P, K, pH, organic matter, soluble salts, zinc, iron, manganese, copper, and boron. A deep sample is recommended for mobile nutrients such as nitrogen, chloride, and sulfur. For those that till, when possible take the samples before the field has been tilled. After tillage it is more difficult to maintain the proper depth of the shallow sample.

Once you have taken the samples you will want to dry them before shipping to the testing lab. The nitrate levels can increase substantially if samples are left moist and warm. Because of this any sample that needs a nitrate test should be air dried within 12 hours of collection. If possible, keep these samples cool prior to air drying samples. To dry, spread the sample out on clean paper in a dust-free heated room. Samples will air dry overnight.

Any good fertility program begins with a good soil test, which begins with a good soil sample. For any field sampling method, the basics of good sampling remain the same and should be followed. For more information on soil sampling or for soil sample pouches and forms contact your local Extension Office.

Medicare Part D

BY: NANCY PAULY

Season greetings to you and your family! During the hustle and bustle of the holiday season be sure to take the time to review your Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan. As you know each year Medicare will allow an open enrollment period, which is November 15th to December 31st. This open enrollment period provides an opportunity to make changes, if needed. The best way to know if a change is needed is to compare the plans with your current medications.

Involve a family member in comparing each of the plans by using the Medicare.gov web site or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE. If you need assistance contact your local Extension Service or a SHIINE or MAP volunteer. It is advised not to procrastinate! Do your plan comparisons NOW before Christmas! If making a change, enroll as soon as possible. Time is needed for the insurance company and Medicare to process your plan, then to provide you with a new prescription drug card.

Enjoy your holidays stress-free by making an informed decision concerning Medicare Part D!

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