



# AG NEWS

**Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources  
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## **Need a Little Excitement?**

Green is a beautiful color, but too much green can make the landscape boring. An easy way to add excitement is to incorporate color and lines. Along the border or wherever shrub groupings exist, spray turf with a nonselective herbicide (Roundup), and kill the grass 3 to 4 feet from the edge of the shrubs. It may take a week to 10 days before the kill is complete. It is best to spray when the temperature is 60 degrees or higher. The warmer and more active the vegetation, the faster the chemical works.

When the grassy area is dead, till or spade the area, adding organic matter to prepare a landscape bed. The outer perimeter can be edged to create a clean border. This area can now be planted with flowering plants to add color following the lines of the original landscape. Use a combination of small repetitive flowering shrubs perennials and annuals. Some plants that add color during the summer and fall are shrub roses, potentilla, dwarf spirea, repetitive blooming daylilies, and butterfly bush. Dwarf fountain grass adds texture, and annuals can be mixed into the border to fill in between more permanent plantings.

Use assorted colors, or make a color scheme with annuals. In the fall and early spring pansies, mums, asters and kale can give the border a new look. Perennials that bloom at different times of the summer and fall will keep the colors changing throughout the season. Treat the ground with a preemergent herbicide to prevent weeds, and top with a fresh layer of organic mulch. The smaller colorful plants can enhance border plants and add interest to ho-hum green. By extending the landscape bed with color plants, the lines of the bed are exaggerated drawing attention to area. When choosing plants, consider sun exposure.

## **Leaves Falling From Trees**

There has been a number of calls regarding leaves falling from trees. Leaves are most often yellow with no discernible disease spots. The falling leaves are well distributed throughout the tree resulting in a general thinning. Trees will often set more leaves in the spring than they can support during the summer. Heat and drought stress will cause the tree to lose leaves that it cannot support with the available soil moisture. In severe cases we are seeing virtually all of the leaves drop and the tree entering summer dormancy. Trees that are summer dormant should have supple twigs and healthy buds. In both cases, the effect on the health of the tree should be very minor and the tree should leaf out normally next spring.

## **YEW PROBLEMS**

Yews have relatively few problems but are especially sensitive to "wet feet." A number of areas have had such heavy rains that yews are showing the effects. Too much rain saturates soils and pushes out oxygen. Because every living cell in a plant must have oxygen (including the roots), waterlogged soil may kill plants. If your yew suddenly loses branches, or the entire plant turns brown, check the soil. Low oxygen levels in saturated soil are probably to blame. Do not over water, and be sure to plant on well-drained soil. If you must plant on heavy soil, shape the planting area into a mound or crown the planting bed so excess water drains away.

## Early Thoughts on Winter Stockers

At first glance, the cattle market situation appears to be similar to this same time last year. Feeder markets are operating at a much higher level than fed cattle and meat markets and appear to be unconcerned with the gap that exists between them. The same was true last year. However, about this time last year we began to realize that feedlot losses late in the year were inevitable and sooner or later pressure would develop on feeder markets. It did and feeder prices dropped from November until about February before recovering in the second quarter of this year. The point is that the risks for stocker production were apparent going into the fall last year. When it was all said and done, winter stockers did ok...not great but not a wreck, and grazeout cattle did quite well with the feeder market recovery in the spring.

This year the same risks are there and probably to a greater extent. The difference this year is that feedlots are already losing money and likely will into the first quarter of 2006. The only thing that might shorten this scenario of losses would be for the Asian markets to open very soon... but don't count on it. The pressure on feeder prices will likely develop sooner in the fall compared to last year. The question is how much pressure and will it extend into February and March next year. In other words, do we have the capability to bounce back as quickly as we did in the spring of 2005? Therein lays my concerns going into a winter stocker enterprise. At today's high prices, stocker budgets will still work. As feeder prices are pressured down by feedlot losses, especially if those losses extend into February, price decreases could be more severe. Expensive stockers this fall could face a serious price squeeze against feeder markets in the spring.

What to do about it? I don't really expect calf prices to drop much this fall thereby providing better buying opportunities (but it is good news for cow-calf producers!). Seasonal declines into October may be muted with strong calf demand. As always, weather will be the key, especially in the early fall. Only if we fail to get rains in the next six weeks would we likely see any downward pressure on calf prices. On the selling side, there are not a lot of good alternatives to manage the selling price risk. Feeder futures and options for the spring are too low to be very attractive. It may turn out again next spring that the option to hold cattle for grazeout is the best bet for a spring feeder market rally. However, heavy feeder cattle prices normally peak in February and decline into May/June, so that would be betting on a counter-seasonal move again next spring. As I see it now, stocker buying this fall should be approached with a healthy dose of caution and with eyes wide open.

## Examine Eye Health of Cows at Weaning Time

Each fall at the time of calf weaning, the cows are brought through the working chute for vaccinations and deworming. This is an excellent opportunity to examine the eye health of the cows. The number one cause of condemned beef carcasses is still "cancer-eye" cows. In the 1994 Non-

fed beef audit, over 1.1 % of the cull cows were found to have cancerous involvement of the eye and/or eye orbit. By five years later, (in the 1999 audit) the incidence of "cancer-eyed" cows was decreased to between 0.2% to 0.4%. Although producers are doing a much better job in recent years of culling cows before "cancer-eye" takes its toll, every cow manager should watch the cows closely for potentially dangerous eye tumors.

Watch for small pinkish growths on the upper, lower, or corner eye lids. Also notice growths on the eyeball in the region where the dark of the eye meets with the "white" of the eyeball. Small growths in any of these areas are very likely to become cancerous lesions if left unchecked. Likewise be aware of cows with heavy wart infestations around the eye socket. Many of these become cancerous over time. Culling these cows while the growth is still small, will allow the cow carcass to be utilized normally. If however, cancer engulfs the eyeball and gets into the lymph nodes around the head, the entire carcass will likely be condemned as not fit for human consumption.

## Kansas State, Oklahoma State Establish Joint Canola Program

Kansas State University and Oklahoma State University have established a Joint Canola Breeding and Management Program. K-State Research and Extension, based in Manhattan, will direct the program at K-State.

The objectives, said K-State Associate Director for Research Forrest Chumley, are to explore canola as a viable alternative oilseed and/or grazing crop for farmers in Kansas and Oklahoma.

The universities plan to hire a canola breeder who will be based at K-State. The breeder will build on work begun by former K-State canola breeder Charlie Rife, said Dave Mengel, head of K-State's Department of Agronomy. Rife left earlier this year for a position in industry, but not before developing canola varieties for the southern Plains.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time we've created a joint position (with another university) within the College of Agriculture at KSU," Mengel said. "Other universities have done this, but this is new for us. It is also a first for OSU."

Jim Stiegler, head of OSU's Department of Plant and Soil Sciences estimated that Oklahoma growers planted 17,000 acres to canola last year. He expects that number to rise to 50,000 acres or more this year, based on seed sale data – not enough to justify hiring a full-time breeder to research the crop for the state.

"Neither of us had the resources to get everything done for ourselves. By working together we could accomplish our research mission and provide improved canola varieties for our producers. We are essentially erasing our borders when it comes to canola.. There will probably be more of this kind of collaboration in the future," said Stiegler of the agreement with K-State.

The United States imports the canola equivalent (oil and seed) of “a couple of million acres” from Canada, Mengel said.

He believes that canola is especially suited for farms from McPherson in south central Kansas and south into Oklahoma: “That’s an area where we grow a lot of wheat, but it’s a fairly harsh climate – hot and dry. A lot of other crops don’t do well there.”

In Oklahoma, the bulk of farmland is devoted to wheat and cattle, said OSU’s Stiegler.

“Growers aren’t interested in letting wheat fields go fallow to break the grassy weed and disease cycle because they need the wheat for cattle forage,” he said. “With canola, we still have a crop, we still have forage, and we can reduce the grassy weed problem chemically.”

## **Stripe Rust of Wheat – Is It Here to Stay?**

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Stripe rust was the major foliar disease observed on wheat grown in Oklahoma during 2004-2005. Why was stripe rust so severe in many parts of Oklahoma in 2005, and what are the similarities and differences between stripe rust and leaf rust? How can stripe rust be controlled, and most importantly, is stripe rust a disease that is here to stay? Information provided in this article will try to answer these and other questions.

The three rusts that can occur on wheat include stem rust, leaf rust, and stripe rust. All three have been reported in Oklahoma, but reductions in yield and test weight have been associated only with leaf and stripe rust. Leaf rust (also called brown rust) is indicated by small, round-to-oval pustules that form on wheat leaves in which reddish-orange spores (technically called urediniospores or urediospores) are produced. Stripe rust (also called yellow rust) is indicated by production of golden-yellow to yellowish-orange urediospores in pustules that are smaller than leaf rust pustules. Additionally, stripe rust has a “stripe-like” appearance because pustules are contained between the leaf veins.

The disease cycles of these two rusts in Oklahoma have similarities and differences. For example, leaf

rust frequently is evident in Oklahoma wheat in the fall, and if the fungus survives through the winter, these infections can serve to provide the primary or first inoculum to start the disease in the spring. Although similar fall infections of stripe rust have not been observed in Oklahoma, the initial inoculum for stripe rust also is likely delivered onto wheat in Oklahoma during the late fall, winter or early spring by winds carrying urediospores from infected fields in Texas. For example, reports were numerous of both stripe and leaf rust in fields across southern and central Texas from the fall of 2004 through spring of 2005. During this time, southerly winds carried both stripe and leaf rust urediospores into Oklahoma, which were deposited onto wheat leaves by adhering to falling raindrops. Once spores of either fungus are on leaves of a susceptible wheat variety, moisture is required for spore germination and infection. Such moisture can come from rainfall, dews, or irrigation. For leaf rust, the optimum temperature range for infection and disease development is 59-72 F. For stripe rust, this optimum range is 50-59 F. Hence, stripe rust is more of a “cool-weather” disease, is more likely to be able to withstand winter temperatures in Oklahoma (especially southern Oklahoma), and tends to appear earlier than leaf rust in the late winter or spring. However, development of stripe rust is inhibited as night temperatures begin to exceed the lower to mid 60s (F). As these higher night and day temperatures occur, areas of leaves infected with stripe rust turn necrotic (=s dead), and leaves are quickly killed.

Both rusts can hurt grain yield and test weight; however, stripe rust accomplishes this more effectively than leaf rust because wheat leaves infected with stripe rust die quicker and more completely than leaf rust-infected leaves. Hence, controlling stripe rust before upper leaves are infected and heavily sporulating is vital to protecting yield. Such control can be approached by planting a variety resistant to stripe rust or by application of a labeled fungicide such as propiconazole [Tilt (Syngenta) or PropiMax (Dow AgroSciences), Quilt (Syngenta), or Stratego (Bayer CropScience)]. For more information on the reaction of wheat varieties to stripe rust, leaf rust, and other diseases, and for controlling wheat diseases with fungicides, contact your County Extension Educator.

### **Conclusions & Main Points:**

- Spores that initiate stripe and leaf rust infections are carried into the state on winds from Texas and deposited onto wheat by rainfall. Spores