



# AGRICULTURAL NEWSLETTER

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources • Oklahoma State University

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## Lahoma Research Station Field Day

Friday, May 21<sup>st</sup> will be the Lahoma Research Station field day beginning at 9:00 a.m. Oklahoma State University Specialist will be showing and talking to producers about Grain Grading, Marketing What Wheat Will Do, Wheat Improvement Team, Farmer Saved Wheat Seed, Insect Management, Weed Management, Lime & Nitrogen Interactions, Fertilizer Calibration Stamp, Grain Sorghum and Canola Production.

For more information, contact the Blaine County OSU Extension Service at 623-5195.



## Blaine County Wheat Variety Plot Tour

Thursday, May 13<sup>th</sup>  
4:00p.m.

**Watonga Variety Plots**  
Located ¼ north of north-end of airport runway

**Roger Gribble**  
OSU Extension Area Agronomist

Joint effort of Blaine County OSU Extension  
Service & Watonga FFA & 4-H Youth  
Foundation

## Musk Thistle Weevil Roundup

Musk thistle is a noxious weed and state law requires landowners to control in such a manner as to not allow it to go to seed. Releasing musk thistle weevils qualifies as a control measure. Collecting nets, batting sticks, and containers to transport weevils will be provided. A good pair of leather gloves will be a must for the roundup.

A roundup is scheduled for Grant County & Kay County. Schedule can be checked at: <http://ipm.okstate.edu/ipm/weeds/muskthistle.html> If you cannot attend a roundup and you would really like to have a container of weevils, contact the Blaine County OSU Extension Office immediately at 580-623-5195.

## Canola

Canola, a winter annual broadleaf, is a crop that could be rotated with wheat. Varieties that are being developed have winter hardiness and are Roundup Ready.

Canola is an oil seed crop and would not be tied to grain markets like other crops grown in the area. Canola utilizes small grains equipment to plant and harvest with just a few adjustments. A rotational crop allows producers to break weed and disease cycles associated with wheat production. There have been some articles in the media recently about Canola production in northwest and north central Oklahoma.

If you would like copies of current OSU and KSU information on Canola, contact your Blaine County OSU Extension Office at 580-623-5195.

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## Using young bulls in multi-sire pastures and cow-to-bull ratios

Producers often ask about the use of young bulls in the same breeding pasture with older, larger bulls. In most instances, this is a practice that should be discouraged if at all possible. Young bulls will normally lose the battle of deciding who is the dominant individual in the breeding pasture. Ranchers report that in some cases young bulls that have been severely “whipped” are less aggressive breeders after that incident. Australian data on multi-sire pastures have shown that some young bulls gain a dominant role as they mature and breed a large percentage of the cows. Other bulls will not gain that dominant status, and only breed a very small percentage of the cows in a multi-sire pasture. The best solution is to always place young bulls with young bulls and mature bulls with mature bulls in the breeding pasture. In some situations, the rancher may choose to use the mature bulls in the first two-thirds of the breeding season, and then rotate in the young bulls. This allows the young bulls to gain one to two months of additional age and sexual maturity. In addition the young bulls should have considerably fewer cows in heat at the end of the breeding season as the mature bulls will have bred the bulk of the cows or heifers. The young bulls will be in the breeding season only a few weeks and should not be as “run down” or in poor body condition at the conclusion of the breeding season.

Also a commonly asked question is: "How many cows should be mated to young bulls?" The old rule of thumb is to place the young bull with about as many cows as his age in months. Therefore the true “yearling” would only be exposed to 13 to 15 females. If he is a year and a half old (18 months), then he should be able to breed 15 – 18 cows. By the time the bull is two years of age, he should be able to breed 24 or 25 cows. Realize that tremendous variability exists between bulls. Some are capable of breeding many more cows than what is suggested here. AND sadly enough, a few bulls will fail when mated to a very few cows. Hopefully, a breeding soundness exam and close observation during the first part of the breeding season will identify those potential failures.

## Bull Management in Multi-sire Pastures

Before the breeding season begins, a few simple management procedures involving the bulls can increase the likelihood of a high pregnancy percentage among the cows.

- 1) In multi-sire pastures, make certain that the bulls that will be pastured together have been in a common trap or pasture prior to the breeding season. Bulls WILL establish a social hierarchy. It is better to get this done before the breeding season begins rather than wait until they are first placed with the cows.
- 2) Put young bulls with young bulls and mature bulls with mature bulls. Mixing the ages will result in the mature bull dominating the younger bull completely, and in some instances causing a serious injury. If the plan is to rotate bulls during the breeding season, then use the mature bulls first, and follow with the yearling bulls in the last third of the breeding season. In this way, the young bulls will have fewer cows to settle, and will be 1 - 2 months older when they start breeding. Observe bulls closely as breeding season begins.

A good manager keeps an eye on his bulls during the breeding season to make sure that they are getting the cows bred. Occasionally a bull that has passed a breeding soundness exam may have difficulty serving cows in heat, especially after heavy service. Inability to complete normal service and low fertility are more detrimental than failure to detect cows in heat to calf crop percent. Such problems can best be detected by observing bulls while they work. Therefore producers should (if at all possible) watch bulls breed cows during the first part of each breeding season. If problems are apparent, the bull can be replaced while salvaging the remainder of the breeding season and next year's calf crop. Likewise a small proportion of bulls can wear out from heavy service and lose interest. These, too, will need to be replaced. The greater the number of cows allotted to each bull in the breeding pasture the more critical it is that every bull be ready to work every day of the breeding season.

Injuries to bulls during the breeding season are relatively common. When a bull becomes lame or incapable of breeding, because of an injury to his reproductive tract, he needs to be removed from the breeding pasture and replaced with another bull.

## Combating Lawn Weeds

May is one of the months to focus on lawn weed control. The bermudagrass is thickening up and grass blades are less sensitive to herbicide injury. If the bulk of your weeds are winter annuals that have blooms and seedpods, mow low. By setting your mower as low as possible, you can remove these plants and provide more sunlight for the bermudagrass. If seed pods are present, it's best to bag the clippings.

You'll want to focus some effort on spraying or pulling dandelions. When the soil is wet after a good rain, dandelions can be hand-pulled and the roots will remain intact. As the soil dries, dandelion roots break when pulled and new shoots will come up from the portion of root still in the ground. Products with 2,4-D type compounds, such as *Weed-B-Gon*®, *Weed Out*®, *Weed Stop*®, *Weed Killer*, or *Tri-Mec*®, can be used to kill dandelions and other broadleaf weeds. To improve weed kill, spray weeds in the morning or evening. Make a second application after 10 days for best results.

Nutsedge will be emerging during May and June. Four herbicides are registered for control of this perennial weed, *Manage*®, *Image*®, *Basagran*® or *MSMA*®. In trials, *Manage*® and *Image*® have provided good control of both yellow and purple nutsedge, when 2 applications are made 10 days apart. *Basagran*® only kills yellow nutsedge. *MSMA*® causes more yellowing of bermudagrass, and may need to be applied as many as four times to control nutsedge. The daytime temperature needs to be between 80°F and 90°F for *MSMA*® to be effective.

## You Can Control Bagworms

Many folks complain that bagworms are hard to control. And they're right, if one waits too long. You'll find that with the right timing, it's easy to control bagworms. Proper timing is the key to stopping bagworm damage.

Bagworms most often attack cedars, junipers, and arborvitaes, and redbuds or other ornamental trees when their populations explode. As they feed, they surround themselves with greenery, forming bags that resemble small Christmas ornaments.

In late May, check your evergreen trees and shrubs weekly for small bags. Take a few moments to stop and look over each evergreen plant. If newly hatched bagworms are present, you'll see small bagworms about ¼ to ½ inch long wiggling on the branches as they feed and build their protective bags. If bagworms are present, it is time to apply a control product.

For control, you can spray bagworms with products containing the bacteria, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, such as *Dipel*® or *Thuricide*®; or you can use a conventional insecticide product such as, *Orthene*®, *Sevin*® or one of the new Bayer insect control materials. Bayer has two products that control bagworms, Bayer *Lawn and Garden Multi-Insect Killer*® with cyfluthrin and Bayer *Rose and Flower Insect Killer*® with cyfluthrin and imidacloprid.

You'll get good control by spraying when the bags are small. Once the bags are 1.5 inches or longer, you will not be able to control the bagworms. After controlling the first group of bagworms, check your plants weekly for one month for additional hatches and reapply control products as needed.

## Tomato Cages

Tomato cages are very beneficial to the production of your tomatoes. Not only do they provide a support for indeterminate types to sprawl upon, but they also keep the fruit off of the ground and provide better air circulation through the plants thereby reducing chances of disease development. By encouraging vertical growth you can also grow more in smaller spaces.

Though manufactured cages are available for purchase, you can build your own. Any strong material can be used including wooden stakes or wire fencing/mesh. Wooden stakes about 6 feet long should be used. Tie the plant to the stake as it grows. Wire fencing/mesh cages should be about 18 to 25 inches in diameter and 3 1/2 to 5 feet tall. Use concrete reinforcing mesh, 10-gauge wire frame or other sturdy wire mesh that has openings of at least six inches. These larger openings allow you to reach in and harvest fruit more easily. Cut and bend the mesh into cylinders fastening the ends together. Snip off the bottom one or two rungs. By cutting off the bottom one or two rungs, the cage can be pushed into the ground at least six inches deep around each plant.

## National Animal Identification Plan may be Implemented

The agricultural industry and the U.S. government are working on developing a trace back system that can accurately and completely identify domestic animals, which may have been exposed to foreign animal disease.

The idea for this system, the United States Animal Identification Plan, was in the planning stages before the Dec. 23, 2003 U.S. Department of Agricultural announcement of the case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy found in a dairy cow in Washington State.

If completed, USAIP would help identify animals exposed to animal diseases, such as BSE, said Jacob Nelson, meats processing manager for the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center.

BSE is a chronic, degenerative disorder affecting the central nervous system of cattle. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "the exact cause of BSE is not known but it is generally accepted by the scientific community that infectious forms of a type of protein, prions, normally found in animals cause BSE. In cattle with BSE, these abnormal prions initially occur in the small intestines and tonsils, and are found in central nervous tissues, such as the brain and spinal cord, and other tissues of infected animals experiencing later stages of the disease."

The USAIP currently includes domestic cattle, bison, swine, sheep, goats, cervids (deer and elk), equine, poultry, game birds, aquaculture, camelids (llamas, alpacas, etc.) and ratites (ostriches, emus, etc), but the primary focus for implementation appears to be within the beef industry.

"The team's focus for the plan is maintaining the health and economic viability of U.S. animal agriculture," Nelson said. "This is viewed to be critical to the industry and to the safety of the U.S. food supply."

According to a draft document presented at the 2003 annual meeting of the United States Animal

Health Association, four basic requirements must be achieved before implementation can occur.

These requirements include a national premises system, the creation and maintenance of a national database, individual animal identification and the ability to track or trace individual animals.

If these basic requirements are achieved, the implementation of the plan will be comprised of three phases.

The objective for phase one is to incorporate state and national premises identification methods that will identify locations that manage and/or hold cattle and has a target completion date of July 2004.

When phase two is complete, both interstate and intrastate commerce will include individual cattle identification.

The final phase is to incorporate radio-frequency identification technology in slaughter plants and live markets to trace live animal movement. The target completion date for phases two and three is July 2005.

According to the development team for the USAIP, "achieving this goal will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of current animal health regulatory programs."

The USAIP is being prepared by the National Institute for Animal Agriculture and United States Animal Health Association and is facilitated by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. For more information on USAIP, visit [www.usaip.info](http://www.usaip.info).