



Grant County Agricultural Newsletter

October 2009

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What Do I Do With My Early Planted Grain Sorghum Crop?

As producers look at their early planted (April) grain sorghum crop, they are faced with a dilemma. Does a producer terminate the crop now and harvest or leave the crop and harvest later in the year with the hope that he can add to the yield already in the field?

In answering this question a producers must ask himself the question of why early grain sorghum? 95% of the producers will answer this question with the thought that the sorghum crop was planted for rotational purposes and plans were to plant wheat in the fall of 2009. If that was the answer to the question, I answer with what are you waiting for? Terminate the crop, harvest in 10 days to 2 weeks and plant wheat behind the harvested grain sorghum crop. The other 5% of you are looking at early grain sorghum followed by grain sorghum, soybeans, corn, cotton or sesame in the spring of 2010.

On September 1, 2009 that was my answer and still is today, however my answer has gotten clouded in late September. The question today is can my 60 bushel per acre early grain sorghum crop that is out there make 20 to 30 bushel more if I wait until a freeze and harvest a

better grain sorghum crop later this fall. Given my fall planted wheat crop, estimated yield of 40 bushels per acre is worth potentially \$4.00 per bushel or \$160 per acre. Can my 60 bushel sorghum crop added by 30 bushels per acre more grain sorghum at \$1.79 per bushel totaling 90 bushels make \$161 per acre later this fall?

Calculations used here would be a push for you gamblers! Each producer should always use his figures to answer his question of terminate and harvest or let the crop go to full maturity and harvest after a freeze. I should let this go at this point, but I can't. Most who set goals and objectives would like to see plans thought to fruition! Your goal for early

sorghum was to harvest the crop and then back to wheat. This goal is still obtainable and would encourage you to follow the plan. My biggest concerns with the calculation above are can you get that extra 30 bushels per acre from your grain sorghum. The early planted grain sorghum has gone through tremendous stresses. You would have to know your hybrid very well to know if you have "staygreen" in your hybrid. I have already seen Charcoal Rot in grain sorghum and suspect

most hybrids to have some problems standing to the November harvest after a freeze. Will the hunger birds from Kansas come down and cause problems with the standing grain sorghum crop? Will an early freeze limit grain yields of the sorghum you are hoping to get?

A wise economist friend of mind once said "a bird in the hand is worth 2 in the bush"! Think about that as you consider your options of terminate and harvest or wait for a freeze to terminate the crop and harvest later this fall.

Harvest Aids

Grain sorghum harvest aids might be needed to terminate the growing crop. These products are needed because grain sorghum is a perennial plant that can live beyond a single season if we don't have freezing weather conditions. Growers commonly use harvest aids in grain sorghum production because of 1) poor initial emergence, 2)uneven head emergence, 3) Delay in maturity, 4)soil textural changes causing differing moisture levels in the soil, 5) Development of late emerging tillers (sucker heads), 6) weeds not controlled during the growing season and may interfere with the threshing process.

Harvest aids do run the risk of reducing both yields and test weights if improperly timed. The grain must reach physiological maturity in order to maintain proper weight. At physiological maturity, the grain has reached maximum weight and additional moisture, nutrients and carbohydrates can no longer move into the grain. At this time, a black

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layer forms at the point of attachment and seals the seed from the plant. It is recommended that no harvest aids be applied to grain you intend to harvest above a 30% moisture level.

Each harvest aid has its own parameters to work with. A producer should study the labels closely to determine if the product will satisfy the needs of the crop termination. Look at products such as Aim, Touchdown, glyphosate or Sodium Chlorate as good options for this operation. Be sure and follow all pre-harvest interval on the labeled instructions of the product of choice.

Roger Gribble, NW Area Agronomist, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Starting Wheat Pasture Stockers

As September arrives, the days get shorter and the weather usually starts to cool off some from the blistering days of summer, it is time for many of you to start thinking about buying and starting stocker calves for wheat pasture. Wheat pasture grazing has been reduced the past couple of years due to dry fall and winter growing conditions and high grain prices. There should be more interest in grazing stockers on wheat this coming fall due to decreasing wheat prices (\$4.70/bushel in July 2009) and the reminder of risk management from grain crop failures due to late season freeze damage. Proper processing and starting can eliminate a lot of health problems before they strike.

Everyone has a favorite vaccination program, but remember that vaccines don't eliminate infections; they help the body's immune system to deal with them. It is probably not as important which vaccine products you use as it is how well the calves are able to respond. Several things can decrease the animal's ability to respond to the vaccines you invest in. Animals must be on a good nutritional program. Protein and trace minerals are especially important. When buying calves, the light calves may look good from a pay weight standpoint, but if they are not immunologically competent you may be buying trouble. Young calves may not have their immune system developed enough to respond well to vaccines. These calves may need to be re-

vaccinated again later to get good protection. Cattle coming off of a long haul will need to rest and recover from the stress before they are processed. Provide good feed and water to allow them to replace the shrink and dehydration. A good rule of thumb is to allow them to rest one hour for each hour they were on the road from the time they left their previous home until they are in your care.

Once you get the calves home and into your starting lots, remember that a thermometer is the best friend you can have. Calves that are developing respiratory disease will show elevated temperatures 24 to 48 hours before they show obvious outward signs. Since early detection and treatment is the biggest factor in quick recoveries and decreased numbers of chronics, this time difference can be crucial. Pull and temp calves as soon as you suspect a decrease in appetite or activity. Remember to "if in doubt, check it out". If you are pulling a few calves that prove to have normal temperatures, you are probably getting all or most of the ones that should be treated. If you don't pull a few normal ones, you are probably missing some problem calves.

Consider buying calves that are weaned or preconditioned. Calves that are right off the cow can't respond well to vaccines because of the stress of weaning. Always remember that anything that causes stress depresses the immune response. In addition, calves that are not accustomed to eating supplemental feed will not be able to maintain a good nutritional status during the conditioning period. Many calves don't know how to eat anything but grass if they are weaned straight off the cow on the way to the livestock auction. It typically takes at least 10 to 14 days for the calf to develop protection from the vaccines you give. If he is exposed to pathogens at the sale barn, he may have serious health problems before this protection can develop. Calves that have been given vaccines before they are weaned, shipped and exposed should have a degree of protection in place when they need it. Preconditioned calves can look higher priced when you are buying, but a lot cheaper after you have had a big drug bill or heavy death loss. Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) has several sales each fall at Ardmore and El Reno where preconditioned

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calves may be purchased. For more information on the OQBN preconditioned stocker cattle sales, contact your local county OSU Extension office.

Today we have several good antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs that are very effective in treating respiratory disease, but what they all have in common is that they are expensive; and, they all work best in calves that have a competent immune system and proper nutritional management. In this case, an ounce of prevention is truly worth a pound of cure.

*Gene Parker Jr., D.V.M.
Area Food/Animal Quality & Health Specialist
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service*

Fall Musk Thistle

In the fall musk thistle plants begin to emerge developing a rosette as it prepares to overwinter. There are several herbicides that do a good job of controlling musk thistle in the rosette stage. If you have an infestation of musk thistle this spring you may want to consider a fall treatment.

Oklahoma Quality Beef Network

The Oklahoma Beef Quality Beef Network is a joint project of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and the Oklahoma Cattleman's Association.

The OQBN will offer unbiased information on beef cattle value-enhancement. Through education and tools, it provides producers and others in the beef industry enhanced access to value added programs which may include health management verification, production system verification, genetic verification, age verification, source verification, individual animal verification and traceability, alignment with appropriate value-added cattle markets, and increased access to export markets.

To enroll calves in the OQBN Vac-45 program, several health and management requirements must be met. Bull calves must be castrated and healed, calves must be dehorned and healed, calves must be weaned 45 days or longer, Beef Quality Assurance guidelines must be followed, calves must be tagged with a program compliant ear tag, and must follow one of the three specified vaccination protocols.

The Blackwell Livestock Market will host a OQBN sale in November 30 which means calves must be

weaned no later than October 14.

For more information about participating in the OQBN program, contact Doug McKinney, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, at 405-744-6060.

Cattlemen's Beef Quality Field Day

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

Kingfisher County Fairgrounds – Kingfisher, OK

8:00am-8:15am – Registration

8:15am-11:00am – Beef Quality Assurance Certification *History, Processing & Treatment, Carcass Composition & Quality, Nutrition & feedstuffs, Care & Handling, Records*

11:00am-11:30am – BVD Testing *Dr. Shaun Sweiger – Cattle Stats, LLC Ron Kramer – Idexx*

11:30am-Noon – Adding Value to Your Calves
Doug McKinney – OSU Extension, Beef Cattle Value Enhancement Specialist

Noon-1:00pm – Lunch

Sponsored by Oklahoma Beef Council

1:00pm-3:00pm – Beef Quality/

Injection Site Demonstration

Jerry Woodruff, DVM, Fort Dodge Animal Health

Please **RSVP** to either, **Kingfisher County Extension Office (405)-375-3822**, or, **Oklahoma Beef Council Office (405)-840-3777**

NW Oklahoma Beef Cattle Conference

[http://oces.okstate.edu/grant/uploaded_files/Beef%2520Cattle%2520Conference.pdf/?searchterm=nw%
2520beef](http://oces.okstate.edu/grant/uploaded_files/Beef%2520Cattle%2520Conference.pdf/?searchterm=nw%2520beef)



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Price".

Scott Price, Extension Educator Agriculture/4-H Youth Development and C.E.D. Grant County