# Upcoming Events

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**Grain Sorghum Meeting**  
Please plan on attending the Grain Sorghum meeting on February 4, 2010 in Blackwell at the Kay Room. Coffee and donuts will be available at 8:30 am and the meeting will begin at 9:00 am.

Speakers will include:
- Dr. Jeff Dahlberg  
  National Sorghum Producers Research Director  
  “Sorghum Check Off Program”
- Rick Kochenower  
  OCES Area Agronomist  
  “Grain Sorghum Production”
- Dr. Rodney Jones  
  OCES Area Farm Management Specialist  
  “Sorghum Budgets and Outlook”
- Dr. Joe Armstrong  
  OCES State Weeds Specialist  
  “Weed Control”
- Dr. Brian Arnall  
  OCES State Soil Fertility Specialist  
  “Sorghum Soil Fertility”
- Roger Don Gribble  
  OCES Area Agronomist  
  “Terminating the Sorghum Crop”

Unless otherwise indicated, all photos in this newsletter are courtesy of Oklahoma State University.
Oklahoma producers have many alternatives for calving seasons. Basically spring and fall have become the seasons of choice, but tremendous differences exist as to what months within each of those seasons are the primary months for most of the calves to be born.

Deciding on the use of one calving season or two calving seasons is a big first step. Many fall calving seasons have arisen from elongated spring seasons. Two calving seasons fits best for herds with more than 80 cows. To take full advantage of the economies of scale, a ranch needs to produce at least 20 steer calves in the same season to realize the price advantage associated with increased lot size. Therefore having forty cows in each season as a minimum seems to make some sense. Using two seasons instead of just one can reduce bull costs a great deal. Properly developed and cared-for bulls can be used in both the fall and the spring, therefore reducing the bull battery by half.

Another small advantage to having two calving seasons is the capability of taking fall-born heifers and holding them another few months to go into the spring season and visa versa. Because of this replacement heifers are always 2 1/2 years at first calving instead of 2 years old. These heifers should be more likely to breed early in the breeding season and have slightly less calving difficulty. Research has shown that these differences are very small, therefore the cost of the other six months feed must be minimal to make this a paying proposition.

Many producers like the dual calving seasons because of the spread of the marketing risk. Having half of the calf crop sold at two different times allows for some smoothing of the cattle cycle roller coaster ride. Heifers that are exposed to the bull or the insemination gun for the first time when they are about 18 months of age will be too old to go directly to the feedlot if they fail to breed. Therefore the culled, open heifers will be marketed as young cows and will sell for a much lower (about $30/cwt lower) price than culled heifers that were to be bred at 13 to 15 months of age. Ranchers that use two breeding seasons need to consider this price discount when deciding to hold the heifers that extra six months before putting them in the breeding pasture.

There are “pros and cons” to two breeding seasons. There are successful cow calf operations with one OR with two breeding seasons.

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**HOW MUCH HAY DO I FEED??**

With “Ole Man Winter” greeting us rather rudely, cows are going to require plenty of available feed to maintain body condition throughout the next few months. In some situations, the standing forage in the pasture or in the form of crop residue will provide much of the energy requirements of the cows. However, snow cover in many areas, as well as low quantities of grass or stalks may require that harvested and stored hay is made available to the cows. How much hay will the cow eat voluntarily? How much hay do I need to plan to feed this winter? How much hay do I need to put out for the next few days?

These questions are all part of the decisions that ranchers must make each winter. Intake in forage fed to cattle is generally limited by the forage capacity of the digestive tract. Forage intake is correlated with forage quality. The more rapid rate of digestion and passage of higher quality forage results in considerably higher dry matter intake compared to lower quality forage that is lower in digestibility.

Lactation represents the greatest need for additional energy beyond that needed for maintenance. An average milking beef cow requires 50% more TDN or energy than she does when dry. It should be noted that lactating cows consume more forage compared to gestating cows due to the increased energy demand.

Large cows will require more energy than will small cows. Therefore the hay or forage requirements are calculated based on a percentage of the body weight of the cow. Be honest with yourself as you estimate cow size and therefore hay amounts that are needed.
What Do I Do With My Nitrogen Deficient Wheat?

Roger Don Gribble, OCES Area Agronomist

My last writing addressed that we had nitrogen deficient wheat in northwest Oklahoma. I was told I did a good job of assisting with the identification of the problem, but did little to assist with the solution to the problem. My hope now is to resolve that issue, but will open up more problems than solutions. The overall solution to the problem is to add nitrogen to the soil solution and feed the wheat crop, thus greening up the crop. Problem here lies with what source and what is the timing.

Timing of nitrogen topdress fertilizer in winter wheat is an important aspect of overall nitrogen management. It is critical to have the nitrogen fertilizer available to the developing wheat as needed. The correct time period for this would be just prior to the joint stage of development in wheat.

On sandy soils, be very careful not to apply topdress nitrogen prior to a heavy moisture event. Too early of an application, we move the topdress nitrogen to low, just as it is today. On our heavier soils, you may need to make an application when you can get on these field or chance rutting up a field because there is too much moisture already in the soil profile. Another thought is that as temperatures warm up in the spring period, there is likelihood of getting some leaf burn. This is more likely with a liquid source of nitrogen. Volatility of nitrogen is not usually an issue during our normal topdress timing because of lower air temperatures.

Sources of nitrogen usually boil down to price. Research done at OSU does not show much difference between sources as long as the application is done in a timely manner and available in the rooting zone. If you are planning an herbicide application with your topdress then you are looking at pricing the liquid sources.

Rate of nitrogen is subject to your yield goal for the particular field you are working with. Ideal topdress fertilizer management does include a nitrogen rich strip. This strip allows you to determine if you need a topdress application. Early indications from our fertilizer strips placed early this fall are that we will need a topdress application of nitrogen.

Without the nitrogen rich strip, we are just guessing at how much nitrogen has been used by the plant and how much nitrogen is below the rooting depth of the wheat. A numeric formula to work from would be 2 pounds of nitrogen for every bushel of wheat in your yield goal. If your yield goal is 50 bushels per acre, it is going to take 100 pounds of actual nitrogen fertilizer to reach that goal. Research indicates that using this formula, your nitrogen management is 33% efficient. 33% sounds bad, and it is, but without the nitrogen rich strip in your fertilizer program, that is the best recommendation at this time.

Your County OCES Extension educator would be available for discussion of your topdress needs and the use of the nitrogen rich strip. Your Educator can also assist with reading your nitrogen rich strip with their hand held sensor in mid February for the most accurate topdress recommendations and yield prediction.

Nitrogen deficient wheat - photo courtesy of KSU

Mailing List

The Kay County Extension office is updating the agriculture mailing list. If you have received this newsletter and would like to stop please contact our office at (580) 362-3194.

Any subscriber to this newsletter who would like the newsletter in an electronic version please let us know by sending us an email (cori.woelk@okstate.edu) or contacting us by phone.
The Kay County Oklahoma State University Extension Service is now taking applications for the Master Gardener Program until January 25, 2010. Master Gardener trainees will be accepted through an application process.

The Master Gardener Program provides in-depth horticulture training for area people. Master Gardener is a title given to individuals that receive over 40 hours of in-depth training from Oklahoma State University Horticulture Specialist and agree, in return to give 40 hours of volunteer service helping their local county extension program.

Master Gardener training will be held during the day at the Pioneer Technology Center in Ponca City, beginning in March and continue for approximately 12 weeks. Training will include topics such as basic plant science, entomology, plant pathology, soils and nutrition, vegetable gardening, woody and herbaceous ornamentals, fruits and nuts, turf management and pesticide safety.

Upon completion of the Master Gardener program, each Master Gardener is required to give back 40 hours of volunteer service. These volunteer hours can be achieved in a variety of ways including presentations, community service projects, master gardener projects, newspaper columns, radio spots, horticulture consultation, assisting with master gardener program class, etc.

Additionally, Master Gardeners will have an in-depth horticulture reference manual. This manual is a compilation of Extension Service fact sheets and bulletins that apply specifically to our unique climate. The cost of the course including all materials is $100; the class fee is due with the application. Applications for a limited number of openings in this class are now being taken at the Kay County Extension Office. The program is open to anyone regardless of race, color, sex, religion, age handicap, status as a veteran or national origin.

For more information contact the Kay County OSU Extension Center at 580-362-3194. Applications can be obtained on the Kay County Extension website; www.okes.okstate.edu/kay. Again the deadline for applications is January 25, 2010.

Sprucing Up a Drab Winter Landscape

David Hillock, Assistant Extension Specialist

This time of year can be a little drab when most plants are dormant. However, several plants exhibit characteristics that can be interesting even in winter. Some plants have colorful or interesting bark and twigs, colorful berries, unique seed heads and foliage with subtle natural tones. Some even like to tease us a little reminding us that spring is not too far away by producing flowers.

Many of these characteristics don’t just jump out at you so you may have to look closely. Sometimes a little stretch of the imagination is helpful to enjoy these intricate details provided by nature.

Several woody plants have interesting bark or twigs that sometimes go unnoticed until the leaves have fallen in the fall. Red twig dogwood can have bright red stems, yellow twig dogwood with yellow stems and Japanese kerria bright green stems. Trees with attractive bark include Heritage river birch, crapemyrtle, bald cypress, lacebark elm, paperbark maple and London planetree. Harry Lauder’s Walkingstick has twisted, gnarly stems that really stand out in winter and make for great additions to indoor flower arrangements.

Plants with showy fruits include chokeberry, cotoneaster, dogwood, euonymus, firethorn, hawthorn, hollies (especially the deciduous forms), nandina and viburnum.

Many perennials develop unique seed heads that persist into the winter months and can also serve as food for wildlife. Ornamental grasses often develop attractive plumes and the neutral tones of the foliage that sway back and forth in the breezes adds additional beauty and interest to the senses.

Winter jasmine can bloom as early as late December and January if we have a mild winter. Otherwise its small, bright yellow flowers appear in February, even before forsythia. Winter jasmine’s young twigs can also be bright green. Witchhazel sports small flowers, not usually as showy, so the plant should be located in an area where they can be viewed up close – like outside the kitchen window or next to an entryway or patio. Witchhazel flowers have strap-like petals and may be brownish to orange, red, maroon or yellow. They appear anywhere from November to March depending on species and cultivar. Winter honeysuckle produces creamy white flowers tinged in pink or red that are lemon-scented and extremely fragrant. Flowers of winter honeysuckle can appear
in late winter to early spring.
So, this winter take a look around your landscape and see what you can find and appreciate. And if you don’t have many plants to enjoy this winter, think about planting some this year to spruce up the landscape next winter. Remember, the next time you go shopping for plants consider other attributes that plants may have beside the typical spring/summer flower or fall leaf color that we often seek.

**Horticulture Tips**

**General**
- Base any plant fertilization on a soil test. For directions, contact your county Extension Educator.
- Provide feed and unfrozen water for your feathered friends.
- Clean up birdhouses before spring tenants arrive during the middle of this month.
- Avoid salting sidewalks for damage can occur to plant material. Use alternative commercial products, sand or kitty litter for traction.

**Trees & Shrubs**
- Fertilize trees, including fruit and nut trees and shrubs, annually. (HLA-6412)
- Most bare-rooted trees and shrubs should be planted in February or March. (HLA-6414)
- Finish pruning shade trees, summer flowering shrubs and hedges. Spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia may be pruned immediately after flowering. Do not top trees or prune just for the sake of pruning. (HLA-6409)
- Look for arborvitae aphids on many evergreen shrubs during the warmer days of early spring.
- Gall-producing insects on oaks, pecans, hackberries, etc. need to be sprayed prior to bud break of foliage.
- Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. (EPP-7306)

**Fruit & Nuts**
- Spray peaches and nectarines with a fungicide for prevention of peach leaf curl before bud swell. (EPP-7319)
- Mid-February is a good time to begin pruning and fertilizing trees and small fruits.
- Collect and store graftwood for grafting pecans later this spring.
- Begin planting blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, asparagus and other perennial garden crops later this month.
- Choose fruit varieties that have a proven track record for Oklahoma’s conditions. Fact Sheet HLA-6222 has a recommended list.

**Turf**
- A product containing glyphosate plus a broadleaf herbicide can be used on dormant bermuda in January or February when temperatures are above 50°F for winter weed control. (HLA-6421)

**Vegetables**
- Cool-season vegetable transplants can still be started for late spring garden planting.
- By February 15 many cool-season vegetables like cabbage, carrots, lettuce, peas and potatoes can be planted. (HLA-6004)

**Flowers**
- Force spring flowering branches like forsythia, quince, peach, apple and weigela for early bloom indoors.
- Forced spring bulbs should begin to bloom indoors. Many need 10-12 weeks of cold, dark conditions prior to blooming.
- Feed tulips in early February.
- Wait to prune roses in March.