

COLUMNS

What's worse?

My husband asked me this question, "what's worse, the polar vortex or the mud?" My answer was the polar vortex. Baby calves born during the brutal cold had little chance of survival without assistance. Now, weeks later, ears, noses and feet are showing signs of frostbite. Mud is bad too, just better.

Fenceline
BY: JODY HOLTHAUS
MEADOWLARK EXTENSION DISTRICT AGENT



In smaller pens, incorporate most of the lot in the mounds and valleys. Ideally a 3 to 5 percent slope (away from feed bunks) should be maintained in the pen, with the mound on the center-line of the pen, perpendicular to the high side of the pen and parallel to the direction of slope. Mounds should have valleys on both sides, with the valley running between the fence and the mound. Fencelines, which are parallel to the mounds, should also be elevated to allow all water to drain to the valleys and to the back of the pen.

In old lots, mounds can be built from a mixture of manure and dirt. Locate the debris basins for collecting run-off outside the pen. Keep the back of the pen clean and open to allow pen drainage to discharge directly into debris basins. Most pen surfaces, including mounds, will need reshaping and soil added each year.

Finally, it is essential that pens surfaces are cleaned annually, with any manure or undigested materials removed from the pen and firm hard-clay surfaces remain. Undigested material, largely in the form of fiber, tends to have a high water holding capacity. These materials will significantly contribute to mud problems by not allowing the surface to dry as fast as they could, plus they may prevent water from running out of the pen.

Also, the amount and depth of mud in a feeding area is also dependent on the number of head or density of cattle in the area. A cow-calf pair, reared in drylot, can require over 750 square foot, while a feedlot animal normally requires about 1/3 this amount of space. However, under muddy conditions, space requirements can easily be doubled, depending on drying conditions and drainage.

Under Kansas climatic conditions, we rarely can eliminate the effects of adverse weather conditions. However, we can minimize effects. Keeping livestock clean and dry will insure animal comfort and enhance returns. The design and maintenance of cattle holding and feeding areas play a crucial role.

Cut down, destroy dead pines!

Got dead pine trees? If you are in the eastern half of Kansas, they probably died of pine wilt, a disease that is widespread in that part of the state. If you are in central or western Kansas, pine wilt is less common, but it can still occur in pockets.

Cut down pine wilt infected trees ASAP (by April 1 or May 1 at absolute latest) and burn or chip the wood (by May 1 at the latest) to break the infection cycle. Do not keep the logs piled up, the beetle and nematode can survive in firewood. In addition, be sure to cut the stump down to the ground, and destroy it, too. By destroying the wood, you'll destroy the nematode that causes it, and the beetle that spreads it.

Planting Fruit Trees

Fruit trees and many small fruit plants are usually sold bareroot, and it is vital that roots never dry out before planting. When plants arrive from the nursery, open the bundles immediately and check for moisture. If the roots are not moist, they should be soaked in water for six to 12 hours before planting. Packages with moist roots can be repacked and placed in a cool, sheltered area if the trees will be planted in a day or two. If wet soils will prevent planting for several days, plants should be heeled in.

To do this, dig a trench in a sheltered, well-drained area out of the sun. The north side of a building often works well.

Lay the plants so the roots are in the trench, and then place soil over the roots. Firm the soil and add water if the soil isn't already quite moist. You should not leave plants heeled in for more than two to three weeks.

Plants can be placed in a bucket of water, as planting holes are prepared. Make the planting hole wide enough to accommodate roots without twirling them inside the hole. If there is an especially long root, cut it to fit. Twirling

long roots inside the hole may eventually girdle the tree. Add organic matter to the area around the planting hole. The treated area should be about 8 feet across. In heavy soil, adding amendments to just the planting hole creates a "pot" effect that can fill with water and drown your new tree. Covering an eight-foot area avoids this problem.

Planting depth is important. Make sure the graft union is between two and three inches above the soil surface after the tree is fully in place. If the graft union is below the surface, the tree may develop scion roots and any dwarfing effect is lost. Water plants in immediately to eliminate air pockets and ensure there is plenty of water for root uptake. Do not fertilize.

On the Extension Line

BY: MATT YOUNG
BROWN COUNTY EXTENSION



Safe handling of take-out foods

The food delivery business has grown in the last year. It is still important to remember food safety!

Remember the two-hour rule and keep foods out of the temperature danger zone of 40-140 degrees Fahrenheit. If you plan to eat hot foods later, divide into smaller portions and refrigerate. Keep cold foods cold too.

Got leftovers? If leftovers are at room temperature more than two

hours, discard them. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers for later use.

When reheating food in the microwave oven, transfer it to a microwave safe plate or container. Sure, it's another step, but I wonder how often it is skipped.

Cover and rotate food for even heating. Always allow standing time before checking the internal temperature of the food.

Reheat foods containing meat or poultry to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Use

a food thermometer to verify the internal temperature of the food. Reheat sauces, soups and gravies to a boil.

If reheating in the oven, set oven temperature no lower than 325 degrees Fahrenheit.

Reheating in slow cookers and chafing dishes is not recommended because foods may remain in the "Danger Zone" — between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit — too long.

Family Life

BY: NANCY NELSON
MEADOWLARK EXTENSION DISTRICT



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1024 MAIN STREET | P.O. BOX 208
SABETHA, KS 66534 | 785-284-3300
SABETHAHERALD@SABETHAHERALD.COM

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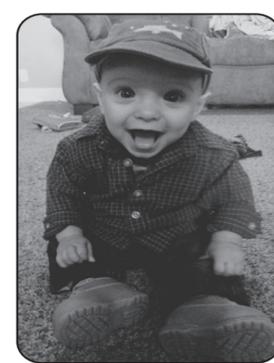


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Love, Mom & Dad

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