



NEWS



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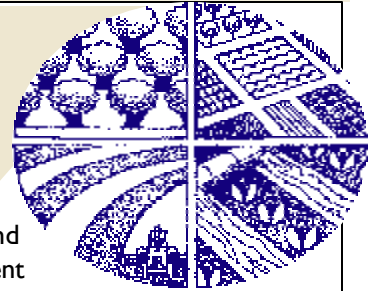


Not all Weather Prognostication is Scientific

Anyone who lives in southern Jefferson County and knows me, knows that I hate winter. Now, I could say that it's because of the fact that as a kid, my dad would drag us out early on a snowy morning to feed cows. Or I could say that living in the country means treacherous driving in winter weather. But the real reason that I hate winter is that I just don't like cold! So, any prediction that this winter would be mild really gets me excited. Matter of fact, I'm always anxious to hang onto any positive information, no matter what the source.

The first big sign that this might be a balmy winter came from the woolly worms. The story goes that if the woolly caterpillars are all black, then we are in
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Soils & Crops On March 29th!!



Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 29th at 6:00 pm for the 79th Jefferson County Soils and Crops Conference, the Jefferson County Social Event of the Year! Many of you have asked if the Conference could be moved back to an earlier date, since June is such a busy time of year for most folks involved in growing things. To accommodate your wishes, we have moved the Soils and Crops Conference to March 29th at the new Hillsboro Senior High School, located at 123 Leon Hall Drive, in Hillsboro, (right across from the middle school which is on Highway 21).

Conference highlights include:

- ✓ Steak dinner prepared by the Jefferson County Cattlemen's Association
- ✓ Displays by businesses and agencies that serve Jefferson County Agriculture
- ✓ Mini educational sessions on a variety of topics like fertilizing pastures, increasing habitat for quail, El Nino and weather, recipe demonstrations, buffer strips, etc.
- ✓ Annual meeting of the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District
- ✓ Presentation of the Jefferson County Farm Family and slide show of their operation.
- ✓ FUN!!!

So, hold on to your hat. Bigger than the Super Bowl, Daytona 500, World Series, and the Final Four, not even terrorists, Saddam, high gas prices, the drought in the West, the stock market crash, the heartbreak of psoriasis, not even something really important like the hole in the sole of my right boot, can stop the Social Event of the Year, Jefferson County Soils and Crops Conference.



Have You Seen a Civet Cat?

(also known as Spotted Skunk)

The civet cat, (Eastern spotted skunk), was once found throughout Missouri. Since the early 1950s its numbers have been declining drastically. Today, the civet cat is rarely seen in Missouri and the Department of Conservation needs your help to evaluate the status of this animal.

Weighing 3/4 to 2-3/4 pounds, smaller than the striped skunk, they have a white spot on the forehead, in front of each ear, and overall are black with white stripes and spots along the head, neck, back and sides. If you have seen a civet cat since 1960, please report your sighting by calling the Missouri Department of Conservation at 1-888-571-1042.



Soybean Response to Fertilizer

By Gary Hoette,
Agronomy Specialist

Farmers often ask if soybeans need fertilizer. Well, the short answer is yes. The real question is if I spread fertilizer this

year ahead of beans, will I get a response? The question has emerged in part because of the dry weather scattered around in recent years. In parts of this state, potassium deficiencies have been seen because of the dry weather. These deficiencies resulted from multiple years of soybeans. We all know that farmers tend to spread extra fertilizer on corn to take care of the beans.

Soybeans have a tremendous ability to extract nutrients from the soil. University of Missouri fertilizer experiments, the past few years, found small yield responses when soil test K was less than 200-lbs/ac. The trouble with soil test levels when they get low is that it takes a lot of fertilizer to build them up. A 40-bu/ac soybean crop will remove 34-lbs/ac of phosphorus and 58

lbs/ac of potassium. A 100-bu/ac corn crop will remove 45-lbs/ac of phosphorus and 30-lbs/ac of potassium.

So, to just maintain soil test levels, you need 0+80+90 to stay even at those yields. With the crops some folks have had in the recent years, that won't be enough. If you fall to the low range it's costly to catch up.

What about other nutrients like nitrogen, boron or sulfur? The result was no response or not enough to pay the bill. Then there are those fields with high-test levels because they have been heavily manured or no one bothered to base fertilizer application on soil tests. You will probably never see any kind of response.

Spend those fertilizer dollars wisely. Sample the soil on a regular basis.

Not all Weather Prognostication is Scientific

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for a rough winter. Of course, if they are mostly orange, then we can expect warm weather. The trouble was that I found some caterpillars that were all black, (brrr!), some that were orange on both ends, and some that were black on the ends and orange in the middle! Seems to me that the woolly worms might also be the same ones that are predicting the stock market! Matter of fact, my 401K might be better off if I'd followed the woolly worms.

Deciding that betting my financial future on the woolly worms, much less the weather, was a bad idea, I decided to go to something more substantial and scientific to predict the weather—persimmon seeds. Kathy, one of the Extension Center secretaries, celebrates the annual event of reading the persimmon seeds. The story goes that if you split a seed, the center of the seed will be shaped like a knife, or a fork, or a spoon. Evidently, a spoon means lots of snow. A



The "spoon"
on the inside
of a an
actual
persimmon
seed

fork means "dig in it's going to be rough". A knife means that the winter wind will cut through you like, well, say a knife. Persimmon forecasting is much too pessimistic for me, although, like the woolly worms, they probably hit the financial forecasting pretty much on the head the last two years.

In desperation, I turned to the Old Farmer's Almanac. Fearlessly, it predicted warmer the first half of winter, but colder the second half. Heavy snow in January, late February, and early March, (pretty much all winter), and also bitter cold in late December, January, and February. I also couldn't help noticing the wise saying for the day. It came from William Shakespeare and was as follows: "Though it be honest, it is never good to bring bad news." Seems like the Almanac authors should have taken their own advice! Also, the web page urged me to shop the Almanac store.

Bet they've got a special on snow shovels!

Certainly, the National Weather Service would be the last word in long-range predictions. I went to their web site and found many, colored maps. Then an analysis as follows: "The temperature forecast was based primarily on warm phase ENSO composites of past moderate and strong cases during NDJ." Say what? And I thought reading woolly worms were complicated! After studying the maps for about two hours, I determined that there is a high probability that the temperature will be about normal for winter, and maybe a little higher probability that precipitation might be a little less. At least the Almanac laid it on the line. But what would you expect from a government agency?

So, I'm anxiously awaiting spring. By the way, do you think that woolly worms eat persimmon seeds?

Addition to Dean's article as of 2/21/03: after the last few weeks of snow, ice, and northern cold, the persimmon seed theory (now in it's 5th year), seems to be correct again - 21 out of 22 seeds had spoons - the 22nd seed didn't have anything. Dean forgot to mention this!
-kat



Early Spring Actions Result in Better Lawns

It's cold and snowy, but before you know it, you'll be out there on that lawnmower cutting grass again! Let's talk about two simple practices that can go a long way in making your lawn healthy and attractive.

First, think crabgrass. Crabgrass is a summer annual that germinates from seed each spring. It chokes out turf grass and produces tons of seed for the next season. Crabgrass prevention, for the most part, begins and ends with the application of a preemergent herbicide. To put it simply, the herbicide forms a barrier in the soil that prevents the crabgrass seeds from germinating. Therefore, crabgrass preventers must be applied prior to the time that the seeds germinate.

In Jefferson County, on the average, soil temperature will not be warm enough for germination until after April 15th. Therefore, get your crabgrass preventer down before April 15th. There are many different herbicides available for crabgrass control. Most all are very effective, with timing of application being more important than herbicide selection. Most products are available in a herbicide/fertilizer combination and are easy to apply by broadcasting or spreading through a lawn spreader. As with any herbicide, be sure to read and follow all label directions. Many of you have commented that your crabgrass preventer was not as effective in certain years. Sometimes environmental conditions favor crabgrass growth. However, *(continued on page 4)*

Be Ready to Assist the Cow at Calving

For many cattlemen, spring calving season is here. All of us old time cowboys in Jefferson County can tell you how to deliver a calf. Yet, every time I look over the guidesheet "Assisting the Beef Cow at Calving Time" I learn something or am reminded of something important that I've forgotten!

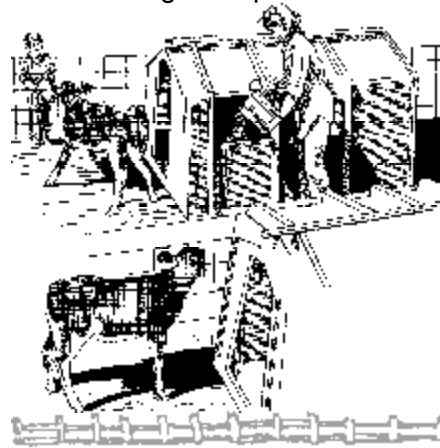
For me, the biggest question is how long do you wait before you provide assistance. Now, of course, this is after you actually have the cow or heifer corralled. So maybe the first real issue is to be sure that you have at least heifers and, perhaps, cows, where they can be easily observed and assisted. I've been involved in those chases where the heifer jumps the fence with you chasing in the pickup truck, or roping in the dark, or better yet roping in the dark in the woods with no flashlight. These scenarios seldom have a good ending. A little preparation certainly increases your chances of success.

Now, back to the questions of how long to wait before assisting. The birthing process is divided into three stages, preparation, delivery, and cleaning. Preparation usually

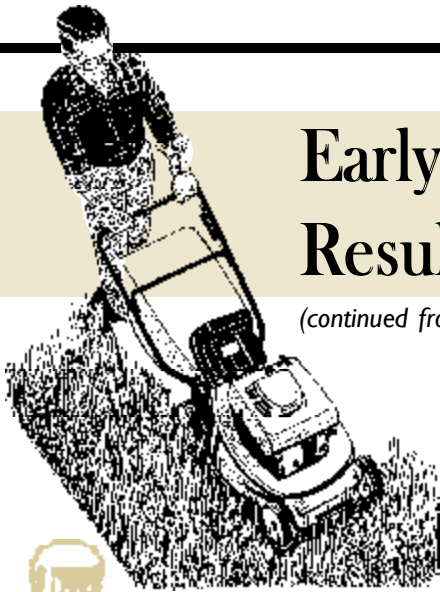


lasts 2 to 6 hours. The calf, which is normally on its back, rotates to an upright position with its forelegs and head pointed toward the birth canal. Contractions begin. Eventually, the water sac ruptures and the 2nd stage, delivery begins. Delivery should take 1 to 2 hours. Cows will usually complete delivery in one hour or less. Heifers may take longer. However, if the calf isn't delivered in 2 hours consideration should be given to assisting the heifer or cow.

If you decide that assistance may be necessary, the order of business is to evaluate the situation. Make sure that the calf is presented front feet first with the head following. If this is not the case, most of us should consider calling the veterinarian. If the presentation is good, then try to determine if the size of the calf versus the size of the birth canal is a problem. Again, before you attach obstetrical chains be sure that this is project that you can successfully accomplish. Once you've pulled the calf halfway out and can't go further, it is likely too late for the veterinarian to be of much help.



Speaking of pulling chains and other equipment be sure to find all the equipment that you need well ahead of calving season. Running around trying to find chains, pullers, lariat ropes and other things wastes valuable time when heifers need assistance. And while your gathering up all your calving tools, call the Extension Center and ask for guide G2007, "Assisting the Beef Cow at Calving Time".



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don't be discouraged. In most years, crabgrass preventers are extremely effective.

Also, here is some really good advice about spring fertilization. **Don't!!** Avoid early spring applications of nitrogen. Early spring applications of ni-

trogen promote top growth at the expense of root growth. The result is more lawn diseases, like brown patch, a greater water requirement, poorer root growth, and increased mowing. If you must put nitrogen on in the spring, wait until mid-May. (By the way, the small amount of nitrogen present in your crabgrass preventer is not likely high enough to be a problem.) So, even though it is tempting to get that fertilizer on early and be the first person on your block to have a green lawn, remember that down the road, in the hot, Jefferson County summer, you will be glad that you waited.



Short Rows



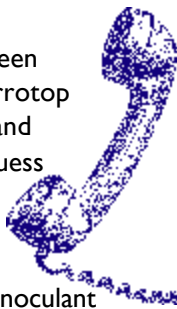
The Extension Center will be moving into the Courthouse soon. In fact, the target date is June 1. At this writing, we still are not sure where we will be moving, but it is possible that it could be into the present assessor's office. More on this later . . .

The cold snowy weather has all the good jokes frozen up! Well, at least the ones, that are fit to tell.



If you plan to overseed pastures with legumes, don't forget to inoculate the seed. Many seedings fail because of poor inoculation. Wet is better than dry. So after you have mixed the inoculant with water and dampened the seed and it sticks to everything and makes a really big mess, cuss me. But later in the spring you'll be happy you followed this advice!

Unfortunately, I have been unable to schedule Carrotop to appear at the Soils and Crops Conference. Guess he is too busy doing AT&T commercials!!!!



By the way, lespedeza inoculant and red and white clover inoculant are different.

And finally from Sue Wille. A guy from Ware picked up a bottle on the bank of the Big River and rubbed the label to see what it was. A genie appeared. The genie spoke out, "Because you have freed me from this bottle, I will



grant you one wish. Now don't underestimate my power. I can grant you any wish that you want! The guy thought a minute and said, "You know I've always wanted to go to the Daytona 500 for Speed Week. But, I'm afraid to fly and all the roads are so congested that it would take forever to get there in my old pickup. Could you make a super highway straight from Ware and across the Gulf to Daytona?" The genie thought a minute. "Well", he replied, "I am a powerful genie, but you know all that concrete and bridges and construction is a lot of work. Isn't there something else that you might want that would be so labor intensive?" The guy thought a minute and answered, "Well, could you help me understand women?" The genie answered, "Two lanes or four?!?"


Dean Wilson
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