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**What Makes a Good Pasture Lease Agreement?**

By: Wesley Tucker, Polk County Extension  417-326-4916

Creating a good pasture lease is not easy and requires some careful thought by both parties. In general, a good lease is one in which both parties agree it is fair and both completely understand each other’s expectations. Most problems with a pasture lease occur when one or more parties do not fully understand what the other one expected. Whether a lease is verbal or in writing, taking the time to discuss these issues ahead of time will prevent 99 percent of the problems that will arise later. Writing out a lease forces you to consider what may seem like minor details now, but can become explosive issues later. Things such as who is responsible for fence repair, will the pastures be mowed, who has the right to enter the property, or can the tenant sublease the property.

**Verbal Lease**

Verbal lease for more than one year are usually considered invalid and unenforceable. Although verbal leases are binding on heirs, enforcing them can create many other problems. Having the lease written out is probably the best thing to do in most all cases. If after one year the landlord and tenant agree to extend a verbal lease for a second year, then the lease becomes what is known as a year-to-year tenancy. The lease will now automatically be extended for another year at the anniversary date of the lease, unless one of the parties provides a termination notice ahead of time. The notice must be in writing and provided 60 days prior to the anniversary date of the lease, which is when a landlord and tenant actually took possession. The termination notice must be in writing, even though the lease may be verbal.

**Written Lease**

The minimum requirements of a written lease are the names of both parties, a legal description of the property, the duration of the lease, the rental rate and payment arrangements, and signatures of both parties. However, there are several other items that should be considered. The first is landowner entry rights. Unless agreed upon in the lease, the landowner does not have the right to enter the property. Another item that should be addressed in the lease is subleasing. If the lease does not state that the tenant is not allowed to sublease the property, then the tenant can sublease with the landlord’s permission as long as it is for the same original purpose. Other special agreements include fence repair and soil fertility. Agreeing on who is responsible for fences and who pays for materials ahead of time will ensure that fences are maintained and kept in working order. Soil fertility and lime is one of the most critical agreements in the lease. It is in both the landlord and tenant’s best interest to carefully consider all details of a lease ahead of time to prevent future disagreements. A written lease is a good way to force everyone to consider the details. Plus it creates an incentive for both parties to structure the lease so it is beneficial to both. A comprehensive fill-in-the-blank pasture lease that can be a guide for developing a lease can be obtained from the nearest University of Missouri Extension office or by going online to [http://www.mwps.org/stores/mwps/files/Free/ncr_109.pdf](http://www.mwps.org/stores/mwps/files/Free/ncr_109.pdf).

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Online Holiday Shopping
By: Janet LaFon

With the holidays rapidly approaching, thoughts are quickly turning to shopping. In today’s high-tech world, many people browse and buy online, as it can save time, money, and effort. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), however, warns shoppers to stop and think before they click. Here are a few precautions they suggest when shopping online:

Know who you’re dealing with. Confirm online sellers’ phone numbers and actual physical addresses in case you need to contact them. Be cautious of pop-up messages and links within e-mail messages, especially if they are asking for financial information.

Read between the lines. Take time to read product descriptions closely, especially the fine print. If you see words like “refurbished,” “vintage,” or “close-out,” it may be an indication that the product is in less-than-mint condition. Counterfeits may be offered as name-brand items with “too good to be true” prices.

Calculate the costs. Visit websites that offer price comparisons so you can compare like items. Don’t forget to add shipping and handling costs (if any) to the total cost of the order before deciding which site offers the best buy.

Pay by credit or charge card. Do not send cash under any circumstances. An advantage of using a credit card is that you have additional protection under the Fair Credit Billing Act if you have problems.

Check out the terms of the deal, like refund policies and delivery dates. The law requires sellers to ship items as promised or within 30 days after the order date if no specific date is promised. If you’re not satisfied, can you return the item for a full refund? Be sure to check who pays shipping costs and/or restocking fees.

Keep a paper trail. As you place orders, be sure to print and save records of your online transactions. This would include the product description, price, an online receipt, and copies of any email correspondence between you and the seller. Review your credit card statements thoroughly when you receive them and be sure to check for any unauthorized charges.

Don’t email your financial information. Financial or personal information like your credit card, checking account, or Social Security number should not be transmitted via email as this is not a secure method of transmitting information. If you initiate a transaction through a company’s website, check to see if the website is secure before providing this information.

Check a company’s privacy policy before doing business. The policy should let you know what personal information the website operators are collecting, why they are collecting it, and how the information will be used. Visit the OnguardOnline website, http://OnGuardOnline.gov for more information.


Strong beef price outlook for two years, MU economist tells grasslanders’ group

Scott Brown, 573-882-3861 Research Assistant Professor

Rising beef prices would be even better in returning profits to feeding and producing cattle if based on rising demand and not shrinking supply, said a University of Missouri beef economist. Livestock producers heard optimism with a bit of caution from Scott Brown at the annual Missouri Forage and Grassland Conference at Port Arrowhead at Lake Ozark on Nov. 4. Brown said with lower corn prices and higher cattle prices; it’s hard not to be optimistic about profits in the beef business. He used all fingers on his left hand to tick off reasons for optimism in 2014 and 2015.

Export demand is booming, domestic demand is improving, the drought monitor map looks better, U.S. cow herd has dropped more than 6 million head in 10 years, and demand for quality beef continues up. He compared current outlook to the “golden era” of beef profits in 2004. “We haven’t seen these conditions in years,” he said. His charts showed a sharp rise in live-cattle futures prices since 2010, from $80 per hundred to $135. Then he showed changes in cow-calf returns from minus $25 per cow in 2009 to plus $25 in 2012.

However, that average jumps to $300 per cow in 2014. That estimate is from the Livestock Market Information Center in Denver. The economist was quick to add, “All bets are off if there is a drought in 2014.”

Risks in the beef business could return in a faltering economy or disease outbreak, or if prices rise too high for consumers. A weak link is domestic demand. “Consumer disposable income will have a big impact,” Brown said. “That is recovering, but any weakness in the general economy will be felt.”

The recession caused a shift away from eating out as often. “The restaurant trade helps beef prices. But you must provide a good eating experience, especially as the price goes up,” Brown told producers The wholesale beef dollar value increased most over the past decade for USDA choice-grade beef. Choice gained nearly $15 billion while lower-quality USDA select increased only $2 billion. More recently, the biggest gain has been in USDA prime grade returns. But that makes up a small part of the total production. Less that 5 percent of all carcasses grade prime.

However, Brown cited research at the MU Thompson Farm: Steers from the AI-bred herd now grade 30 percent prime when fed out. Those results from the agricultural research center are now being topped by producers who’ve adopted the protocols. “Investment in genetics can increase carcass premiums by $25 per hundredweight,” Brown said. “The research shows that it is not just in the feeding but in the genetics that make prime possible.” The turnaround in beef will be slow because of the long biological lag between breeding and final fed steer. Pork and chicken can re-enter the market quicker than beef. “We already see increased chicken consumption following their dip in marketing that started in 2008.” To compete, beef must continue to provide the flavor and tenderness that consumers want. “It’s unfortunate that high beef prices result from the loss of supply,” Brown said. “A growing economy would do the most for beef demand.”

Brown, a member of the MU agricultural economics unit, covers beef and dairy policy for the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. http://extension.missouri.edu/news
Cold Weather Management Schedule for Sheep and Goats
By: Jodie Pennington

This schedule is to be used as a guide to assist you in developing a protocol for your winter management program. Practices and dates may vary with your specific program. Regardless of your program, it is important to record each task and the results so you can refer back to it in following seasons or years. Generally, this schedule is for late spring kidding or lambing. You can adjust back one or two months if you want animals to give birth earlier in the year or go forward if you want to kid or lamb later in the year. Periodically, look at the schedule to see if a management practice should be conducted in the present month or should be done in another month. Some practices should be conducted every month or as needed, i.e., evaluations of forages, body condition of animals, foot care, health, need for culling and internal or external parasite control.

- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory. Start looking for hay if needed, initially from a neighbor or close-by farm. Look on the internet for hay if you cannot find it locally. Winter annuals should have been sown by early September if adequate moisture was in the soil. Consult with your local extension office to determine the best options for annuals if you want to plant this season. Spring grasses can be sown from late January to early March. Summer annuals can be sown from early May to early June. Check MU Extension Guide G4652 for more specifics.

- If you have goats and feed is limited, consider putting the non-lactating animals in good vegetation in the woods. They should do well. Remember to provide trace mineralized salt and protection from predators. Consider letting either sheep or goats eat your left-over garden or maybe corn stalks if you have them.

- Provide best quality forage to animals in breeding herd. Test hay for nutrient content to insure that minimal nutrients are available to meet the nutrient needs of your animals.

- Soil tests should be done every three years to determine fertilizer needs. Fertilize and lime as needed for the yield you want.

- Treat for internal and external parasites as needed. Later in the winter, observe for and treat for lice if necessary.

- Evaluate animals for body condition and health; sell unsound and inferior animals. Be especially critical of animals with no teeth.

- Evaluate for foot rot and needs for hoof care. Trim as needed.

- Is your marketing plan sufficient? How can you improve it for next year? Remember that Ramadan (month of fasting for Muslims starts on June 28 and goes to July 27, 2014. Historically prices are lower during Ramadan. Females bred in December will kid or lamb in late April or May so shelter may or may not be needed at parturition. Will you be able to get your kids or lambs ready to sell by midsummer (late July) if a drought hits? If they have good feed available, should you wait until Thanksgiving to sell market animals when prices are usually a little higher? Next year, should you plan to breed earlier and have the animals give birth earlier and market the offspring before Ramadan (Remember that Ramadan moves back 11 days each year.)? Either way can work, you just need to plan accordingly. Kids and lambs grow better in cooler weather and parturition is less stressful in cooler weather. However, generally animals cost more to rear since you may have to feed hay rather than grass. The days before Easter are usually the highest meat prices of the year for small ruminants.

- Start the month by giving your bucks or rams a good examination and their selenium shot, if needed; check the housing for the bucks to make sure that it is escape proof.

- Begin preparing for the breeding season if not already done so. Pull out your production records and decide which does or ewes will be bred early and which will be bred later. Your decision on marketing will affect breeding dates for the animals. Vaccinate for reproductive diseases if they are a problem in your area. Begin flushing breeding animals, especially if you have sheep. The data are mixed on results of flushing goats. Flush with fresh green pasture or 1/2 pound feed/head/day for 2-3 weeks before and after breeding season.

- If you plan to use bucks or rams from other people, be sure you have contacted the owners and have made arrangements. Allow for a quarantine period before the male goes in with your females.

- Keep fences in good repair to prevent breeding accidents. Review all facilities to minimize exposure of sheep and goats to nails, debris, mud or manure. Do animals have shelter for winter? More shelter will be needed if animals give birth in snow or cold rain. Are the pipes protected from freezing? Check all equipment and conduct maintenance as needed. Check water quality and quantity if it appears to be a problem.

- Have special buck-handling (or ram) coveralls ready for use to help keep odor from your regular clothes.

- Breed large kids and lambs that weigh at least 70% of the expected mature weight.

- Plan to attend educational meetings. Visit with a neighbor to see what he/she is doing that might be able to improve your management program.
Choosing and Caring for Your Christmas Tree
By John Hobbs

Many will soon visit their local tree grower or tree lot in search of the perfect Christmas tree. Selecting a good tree and proper care for it once it is home can ensure a safer, more enjoyable holiday season. Consider these tips:
If selecting a cut tree, watch for these signs that the tree is too far gone.
Needles are a dull, grayish-green color
Needles fail to ooze pitch when broken apart and squeezed
Needles feel stiff and brittle
Gently pull on several needles to check for freshness. If many come off, look for another tree. Also, lift the tree and strike the butt end on the ground. If many needles fall from the twigs, the tree is probably not fresh. You can also break a few needles to see if they are moist and fragrant.
Once you have your tree home, recut the trunk about one inch above the original cut. This will open up unclogged water conduct- ing tissues. Immediately place the trunk in warm water.
Locate the tree in as cool a spot as possible. Avoid areas near fire- places, wood-burning stoves, heat ducts and television sets as the heat will result in excess water loss. Make sure the reservoir stays filled. If the reservoir loses enough water that the bottom of the trunk is exposed, the trunk will need to be recut. Adding aspirins, copper pennies, soda pop, sugar and bleach to the water reservoir have not been shown to prolong the life of a tree.
If you choose a living Christmas tree, be sure to dig the planting hole before the ground freezes. Mulch the hole and backfill soil to keep them from freezing and becoming unavailable for plant uptake.

What to do with the Christmas tree After Christmas?
By: John Hobbs

After the holidays, many municipalities allow old Christmas trees to be placed curbside. Trees are then collected and ground up for mulch or burned. If you miss the designated date, or your trash collector doesn't accept trees, there are several options to prolong the useful life of the tree.
An old Christmas tree can be used to benefit birds, fish, and the landscape by placing it in a corner of your deck, and spreading some birdseed nearby, or tying it to a deciduous tree or post near a bird feeder. The birds benefit from having escape cover nearby when hawks or cats threaten, and the dense boughs reduce the wind -chill on a cold night.
Sinking your Christmas tree in a pond is an easy way to improve fish habitat and fishing. The tree serves as a little coral reef, in that the branches provide substrate for water plants to grow, and cover for minnows and other forms of small aquatic life. Larger fish are drawn by the shade and the presence of prey.
How do you sink a tree? Tie the base to a cinder block with a short, stout rope, and toss it in. Just be sure to get permission from the pond owner first!
Using the little tree around the landscape requires clipping off all of the branches. Use the boughs to add extra insulation around semi-hardy perennials or to trees and shrubs that were recently planted. The leftover trunk may be used as a garden stake next spring, or cut and let it dry for a few weeks, and you will have some easy lighting firewood. Just beware that most conifer species tend to spark and pop more than hardwoods, as resin pockets in the wood make tiny explosions. This can delight the youngsters, but for safety's sake keep an eye on the fire when burning Christmas tree logs!

Upcoming Events:
The Barton County Soils & Crops Conference is scheduled for Thursday, January 23rd, at Thiebaud Auditorium in Lamar at 9:00 a.m. Topics will include: Economics of 100 Bu. Wheat, Understanding GMOs, Pollination, Cover Crop Management, the Crop Scouting Program and a representative from the Soybean Association will speak. There is no charge for the conference, but to allow for adequate food preparation please register by calling the Barton County Extension office, 417-682-3579, no later than January 20.

MU scheduled meetings to tell dairy farmers plans for their profit-margin safety nets. Dairy farmers are operating without a financial safety net. The federal Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) programs expired Sept. 30. Congress has not passed a farm bill to replace it. When milk prices crash, and prices do, farmers need protection. Workshops on insuring dairy margins and the mechanics of a new margin program in the proposed farm bill are scheduled as follows:
- Dec. 2, MU Southwest Center, Mount Vernon.
- Dec. 3, Missouri State University Fruit Experiment Station, Mountain Grove.
- Dec. 4, Cape Girardeau County MU Extension Center, Jackson.
- Dec. 5, Hagie’s Nineteen restaurant, Union.
- Dec. 6, FCS Financial meeting room, Sedalia