Corn Planting Dates and Cold Temperatures Concern Producers
By: Jill Scheidt

With the possibility of temperatures nearing 32 degrees or below, there is concern among producers for damage of the wheat head. According to Bill Wiebold, state specialist with the University of Missouri Extension, wheat is the most sensitive to freezing temperatures when the heads are coming out and flowers are beginning to form. To check for freeze damage, wait 3 days after the low temperature occurs, cut the stem open and locate the forming wheat head. It is normally white or a pale green or yellow color. If the head inside the stem has turned a brown color, freeze damage is likely to have occurred.

University of Missouri Extension cereal crops specialist Brent Myers and agronomy specialist Bill Wiebold advise growers not to plant too soon when soils begin to dry. Planting and other traffic will compact wet soil. Roots in compacted, wet soil can’t grow properly and are more vulnerable to disease. Producers should not be overly worried about planting corn in late April. Significant yield losses in corn are not seen until planting after the first of June. “There’s no reason for alarm,” Wiebold says. “Reasonably high yields can be obtained when corn is planted in mid-to late May.” Potential yield losses occur slowly in corn planted during May and potential yield losses increase in corn planted in June due to non-ideal weather conditions occurring in July and August. Myers and Wiebold suggest that data indicates switching out of corn may not be wise even if planting is delayed until the end of May.

Due to frequent rains and low soil temperatures, corn planting was only 8 percent complete by mid-April, compared to 37 percent this time in 2012. However, last year’s planting season should not be used as yardstick, Wiebold says. The average over recent years is only 17 percent. Myers cautions growers against a hasty decision to switch corn acreage to other crops such as soybeans. Results vary among farmers and fields, but MU data indicates that there is still time to plant corn as intended.

The weekly field crop scouting report is sponsored by the University of Missouri Extension and Barton County Extension. For more information on this scouting report, or to learn how you can receive it a week earlier by telephone, contact the MU Extension Center in Barton County at (417) 682-3579.
Avoid Travel Scams
By: Janet LaFon
With the arrival of summer comes vacation time for many people. To keep your dream vacation from turning into a nightmare, be cautious when it comes to offers for “free” vacations. While some may be legitimate, many are travel scams. For example, you may have received a postcard saying that you have won a free vacation. Usually, you have to call for more details or to claim the prize. But is this legitimate or a scam?

According to the Missouri Attorney General’s office, there are several kinds of travel scams. In one version, you are told that you will receive a package in the mail detailing the vacation offer. The operator then asks for your credit card number, saying there will be a small service charge made to your account if you accept the vacation. You are assured that you will have a review period to decide if you want the package before your account is billed for the service charge. This promise usually proves to be false, and the fee charged could be hundreds of dollars.

Another scam offers a “dream vacation” for an incredibly low price. After you agree and give your credit card number, you learn the catch. To qualify you have to buy a second round-trip fare at “regular price.” This price may cost two or three times more than it would if you bought the ticket in advance or from an airline or reputable travel agency.

In other instances the salesperson fails to mention that the “free” vacation doesn't include meals, taxes, deposits or surcharges. How do you avoid becoming a victim of travel scams?

Here are a few suggestions:

- Don’t give your credit card number to any person or business unless you expect to be charged for a product or service.
- Be suspicious of ads that have few details and promise a lot for little money.
- Be cautious of firms that ask you to pay before confirming reservations. Most reputable travel agents will confirm before payment.
- Deal with an established firm. If a firm is unfamiliar to you, check with relatives, friends or the Better Business Bureau.
- If you are unfamiliar with the firm, request written information on total cost of the vacation and all items included. Any transportation, lodging, meals or other items not specifically mentioned may not be included.
- Ask about your right to cancel. If you get ill or change plans you could end up paying for a trip you never take. Also, inquire about the availability of cancellation insurance.
- Remember, the better a vacation package sounds the more thoroughly you need to verify the package’s details.

Warm Weather Management Tips for Sheep and Goat
By: Jodie Pennington

Evaluate forage conditions and inventory at least monthly. Check all items on this list as needed.

- Plant summer annuals for pasture, if needed. Do other pastures seem healthy and growing well? Check with your local extension office if you have questions.
- If not already done, test soil to determine fertilizer needs. Fertilize pastures as recommended.
- Be sure feed, hay and water are fresh and clean.
- Discontinue supplemental feeding to animals as economics dictate.
- Watch your animals daily while they eat: are they energetic? Watch for ones that are off feed, sluggish (ears can be an indication of how they feel) or starting with scours or bloat.
- At first sign of bloody scours, consider treating with a coccidiostat. Better yet, you or your vet can check fecal samples to identify any parasite that might be involved.
- Don’t wait for parasites to become a problem. Talk to your vet about a parasite prevention program for your herd. Remember – wet, warm weather and the use of pasture increase worm problems. Treat as needed for internal parasites.
- Rotate pastures as needed to minimize worm problems.
- Vaccinate for CDT and other diseases as needed.
- Make sure you save enough colostrum from those last does or ewes to freshen, to heat treat and freeze for the start of the kidding season next year.
- All wool sheep should be shorn. In smaller herds, it is also beneficial to give all your goats a clipping or hair sheep a trimming if needed. This will help control external parasites and make them cooler for the hot weather.
- Trim feet on the whole herd or flock as needed.
- Monitor body condition of nursing mothers and supplement as needed. Provide nursing animals with the best forages.
- Graze fescue closely to keep it vegetative.
- Rotate pastures to minimize exposure to internal parasites.
- Begin looking for replacement bucks/rams with good conformation, structural correctness, muscling and high weight per day of age.
- Watch dry stock. To keep them from becoming excessively fat, restrict their grain and encourage pasture and forage consumption.
- You should have your breeding program for this fall thought out by now. Do you have a buck or ram? If using artificial insemination, have you ordered the semen that you want to use?
- Fly time – be sure all control methods are in place.
- Check new hay for dryness to prevent mold later.
- Cut excess pastures as hay if quantities are adequate to justify baling; if not, clip and fertilize to keep the forage vegetative and growing well.
- Watch for heat stress in heavy milkers and young animals.
- This is the time to get your good quality hay lined up and into your barn. Some hay dealers will give you a price break if they deliver directly from their field to your barn.
- Clip your pastures. Doing so will help control the weeds that goats won’t eat and promote the growth of good forage. Goats won’t eat some weeds.
- Whether you show or not, take time to support the local 4-H and FFA youth; go to the local fair and see their projects.
- Monitor the growth of your kids/lambs. February kids should weigh at least 50 pounds in June; lambs should weigh 70 lbs.
- Evaluate does and bucks; sell unsound and inferior animals.
- Criteria for culling: Barren females – missed two seasons in a row for sure—better if they miss one season; Bad teats or udders – too big or too small (mastitis); Bad mouths – smooth or broken mouths or over- or under-shot jaw; Structural defects – bad feet and legs or back; Bad testicles – too small or infected (epididymitis); Unthriftiness – due to old age or disease.
- Start the month by giving your bucks/rams a good examination and their selenium shot, if needed; check the housing for the bucks/rams to make sure it is escape proof.
- Begin preparing for the breeding season. Pull out your production records and decide which does will be bred early and which will be bred later.
- If you show, are you prepared? Will there be any schedule changes? Breed your animals with next year’s shows in mind.
- Breed by weight rather than by age. Replacements should have reached about 65 percent of their adult weight at breeding time.
- When moving animals, try to minimize stress on animals by doing so in cooler mornings.
- Consider weed-eating and/or spraying to control weeds. Keep homestead looking nice.
Sort, Sort, Sort  
By: Eldon Cole  
Extension personnel seem to have a habit of complicating farmers’ lives by suggesting practices that create more work. Recently, a farmer asked about his winter feeding strategy. In the conversation, I asked about his spring calvers and the fall calvers. He replied, “oh, they all run together.” Come to find out he had over 150 cows in the herd. I doubt if I changed his management practice, but I told him it should pay to reduce his herd numbers and to at least split them into 2 groups, spring and fall calvers. He thought that would make more work.

What are the advantages? For one thing the feeding can save money by matching the feed they receive, based on quality and quantity and the production status of the cow. Lactating cows require more quality feed than dry cows. When you feed them all together, it’s hard to keep the fats from getting fatter and thins from getting thinner.

Age is another sort to be considered. Some of my best cow-calf operations do not let first and second calf heifers run with the mature cows. Once again, it helps to be able to feed these young, still-growing females more and a little better so they’ll be in shape to come back in heat. If they have to contend with older, bigger, more dominant cows for feed, grazing etc. they suffer.

If you practice pasture breeding, having the young females split off makes bull selection and management easier. If they are with the older cows, there’s a chance of getting bred by their sire. Of course when the whole herd is together and the bulls out year round, the chance for sire-daughter matings certainly exists. Leaving the bull out, 365 days is another reason feeder buyers discount heifer calves as 30 percent or more may be pregnant.

During calving you’ve probably noticed that health problems such as scours affect the young calves more than the older ones. Thus, another reason to sort calves and their dams and keep the newborns away from their big brothers and sisters until disease risks are less.

Another common sense reason to not have 100 or more cows or yearlings running together is day-to-day observation. The owner or manager can see problems easier if he’s only looking at herds of 40 head or less. Contrast that with having to observe 150 cows and calves in a pasture. Problems like foot rot, pinkeye, respiratory problems, possibly calving difficulty and simply counting to make sure no animals are missing is easier in the smaller numbered herd.

Each owner has a comfort zone as to the number they can effectively watch over. I read about and see pictures of the practice called mob-grazing. I’d think it would be difficult to look for individual animal problems in that heavily stocked situation. A herd owner should closely assess his or her capability when it comes to observation of their cattle, whether yearling steers, heifers or a cow herd. Be honest with yourself and in many cases you’ll decide you could do a better job and head off some problems early by sorting your cattle into smaller groups. Yes, it will take more pastures, but it should make you a better manager.

Joke of the Day: A city slicker moves to the country and decides he's going to start farming. He goes to the local co-op and tells the man, "Give me 100 baby chickens." The co-op man complyes. A week later the man returns and says, "Give me 200 baby chickens." The co-op man complyes. Again, a week later the man returns. This time he says, "Give me 500 baby chickens." "Wow!" the co-op man replies. "You must really be doing well. "Naw," said the man with a sigh. "I'm either planting them too deep or too far apart!"

Missouri’s Armadillo Problem  
By: John Hobbs  
The armadillo is a rather interesting and unusual animal that has a protective armor of horny material on its head, body and tail. The nine-banded armadillo (Dasypus novemcinctus) that we have in Missouri is named for the nine movable rings of body armor between the shoulder and hip shield. It is now quite common to see them belly-up along the road in Missouri. The first mention of armadillos in Missouri was in a publication dated 1959. The publication mentioned only seven sightings of armadillos in our state but said armadillos were well established in Kansas at that time. Armadillos are mainly nocturnal but occasionally move about during the day.

They burrow in the ground and root in ground litter searching for insects, grubs and other invertebrates such as armyworms, cockroaches, ants, wasps, flies, beetles, and grasshoppers. They have been known to dig up entire yellow-jacket nests. As armadillos search for food, they dig small holes in the ground that are about 3 inches wide and 5 inches deep. This digging makes them undesirable for those who like a well-manicured yard. They also uproot flowers and other ornamental plants. Armadillo burrows under driveways and patios can cause structural damage; and burrows in pastures can pose a potential hazard to livestock. Disease risk is also a negative factor associated with armadillos. They can be infected with Mycobacterium leprae, the bacterium that causes leprosy. There has been no conclusive evidence that humans can contract leprosy from armadillos.

How can armadillos be controlled? Recommended methods of control include: 1. Reduce watering and fertilizing lawns 2. Creating barriers (e.g., fences) 3. Live-trapping 4. Shooting offending individuals. Reducing watering and fertilizing your lawn will reduce armadillo damage. A moist lush landscape is perfect for earthworms and insect larvae. Armadillos love earthworms. Sometimes watering adjacent areas may attract armadillos away from a site. Where highly valued plantings are in need of protection, small fences may be used to keep the animals out. These fences should be approximately 24 inches (60 cm) above ground with the bottom of the fence buried 18 inches below the surface of the ground. The fence also should be slanted outward at about a 40° angle. Several live-trapping techniques can be used to capture armadillos as they come out of their burrows. One is to firmly insert a 6-inch-diameter PVC pipe into the entrance of an active burrow. Regular-sized armadillos will get stuck in the pipe as they try to exit. A nylon throw-net used for fishing can also be staked down so it covers the burrow entrance. Armadillos will get tangled in the net as they emerge. Because armadillos are nocturnal, all trapping techniques designed to capture armadillos emerging from burrows should be applied late in the afternoon and checked several hours after darkness. Some armadillos can be discouraged from returning to burrows by filling the hole with a mixture of dirt and mothballs after you are sure they have left for the night. Constant filling of the hole will often prevent them from returning. Laying chicken-wire along a patio, driveway or house foundation will also discourage them from burrowing. Armadillos also can be trapped in raccoon-sized, metal, cage live-traps (available from local pest control and feed stores) or in homemade box traps. Traps should be located near the entrance of burrows or along fences or other barriers where they might travel. This trap is most effective when "wings" (1 x 6 inch x 6 feet boards or other material) are added to funnel the animal into the trap (See Figure 3 ). The benefit of using baits with this trap is questionable. Suggested baits are live earthworms or mealworms.
Is Fescue a Good Hay Crop?
By: John Hobbs
Tall fescue has a reputation of being poor hay, but most of the reason for the reputation is fescue hay is baled too late in the growing season. Anytime a cool-season plant matures, forage quality drops rapidly. Crude protein will drop up to 0.5% per day from boot stage to mature seed stage. Table 1 shows the effect of stage of maturity on hay nutrient content and animal performance. Hay that is cut at an earlier stage of maturity is lower in fiber. This increases digestibility and enables cattle to eat more of it. As a result of higher intake of more digestible forage, animal performance is much higher. Note in Table 1 that Average Daily Gain is almost a full one pound higher for early vs late-cut hay.

### Table 1. Effect of stage of maturity of fescue hay on feed quality and animal gain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Harvest</th>
<th>% Crude Protein</th>
<th>DM Intake Lbs/Day</th>
<th>Percent Digestibility</th>
<th>Lb of Hay per Lb Gained</th>
<th>Gain per Day, Lbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late Boot to Head, cut</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Bloom (10% shedding Pollen), cut</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Milk (seed forming)</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The secret of quality fescue hay is adequate fertility & early cutting. Fescue hay should be cut in the boot to bloom stage in this area to ensure a high quality. Cutting the grass for hay at this stage also results in lower levels of the endophyte in the hay. To ensure high quality fescue hay should be cut in May in south Missouri. Hay should be harvested in such a way that the time between mowing and baling is minimized. Substantial dry matter losses occur every day the hay remains in the field. Hay crops should be handled carefully to maintain a high quantity of leaf content. Because the leaf is the most delicate part of the plant, it dries much faster than the stem. If hay is too dry when it is worked, such as with a tedder or rake, many of the leaves will fall off. Much more protein and energy are found in the leaf, so management to retain high leaf content is important to the feeding value of the hay. This is much more of an issue with legumes than with grasses. Dry matter (or moisture) percentage of hay is critical to its quality. Forages, particularly the legumes, should not be raked or tedded when they fall below 35 to 40 percent moisture. The final drying (from 35-40 percent moisture down to 18-20 percent) should occur in the windrow. Moisture in the hay crop should be no higher than 18 to 20 percent when baled. Hay that is wetter than 18 to 20 percent will mold in the bale, thus reducing both nutrient content and animal acceptability. However, if hay is baled at much less than 12 to 15 percent moisture, there is significant leaf loss due to the handling of this very brittle crop. Hay made late is not only low quality, but also may contain higher levels of toxins, which reduce animal performance. Cut fescue when it starts to show a few heads. Delaying haying to get a seed crop will result in very poor quality forage. Another thing to remember is quality hay saves money next winter when additional protein is added to a cow’s diet because the low quality hay will not meet the nutritional needs of the cow. Quality hay does save money.