



Clover Corner

Lindsey Mueting County Extension Agent 4-H Youth Development





Happy March! Hard to believe that summer event planning is so far underway! Discovery Days and OzSome 4-H Camp registration opens March 1! OzSome 4-H Camp is June 14-17! Remember, you do NOT have to be a 4-H member to attend camp, invite your friends!

Summer will be a fast paced and fun time for McPherson County 4-H. I hope you have your 4-H projects well underway. If not, no time like the present to start! Many county-wide projects are beginning so check out the newsletter

for more info- you may even find a new projects are beginning so encer out the newsletter drop and add projects until May 1. Keep going on the 4-H Development Fund - many scholarships and extra activities we have are made possible because of these funds!

Match Day



Match Day on Wednesday, March 6, holds incredible opportunity for McPherson County 4-H. On that day, McPherson County Community Foundation will match donations made to our endowment fund—our long-term savings—and with your help, we could potentially receive up to \$12,000 of the \$60,000 match available. Here's how Match Day works:

* Come to the event and make a donation. Checks can also be brought in for a donor. If family, friends or supporters can't make it that day, collect their check to bring to the office or Community Foundation for the event. Gifts can also be given online!

Date:	Wednesday, March 6
Time:	7 am – 5 pm (Online giving from 7-11:59 PM)
Place:	McPherson County Community Foundation, 206 S. Main, McPherson

- * Matching funds will be given to our organization based on a proportional basis. For example, if \$100,000 is raised and our organization received 10% of the total donations, we will receive \$6,000 matching funds
- * Minimum donation amount per donor for a match is \$25. There is no limit on the amount of funding donors may contribute to the nonprofit organization's endowed fund.
- * Cash, checks and credit cards will be accepted. Make checks payable to: MCCF.

	4-n Calendar	4-H Council	
March 1 6 8 11-14 23	Oz-Some 4-H Camp Registration Opens!!! Match Day- MCCF 4-H Club Day Entries Due Jr Leaders Spring Break Trip 4-H Club Day- 8:45 AM, Newton	The next meeting will be held April 4 at 7 PM. We still have a few clubs that we did not receive council member information for. Please call Terra and let her know who your council members are if you have not already. These are the people who receive meeting reminders, news and cancellations. Thanks!	
4-H Online			
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Remember that you are able to access your enrollment information at any time via 4-H ONLINE. If you would like to add or drop a project for 2019, this must be done by May 1. All final project lists for 4-H fair exhibit eligibility will be printed on May 2. If you have not paid the program fee to the State, please do this ASAP! Contact Lindsey with any questions!

Fair Time is Coming!

Thank you to all the wonderful fair theme ideas that clubs submitted. 4-H Council voted and we have our top three themes!! Remember, these will displayed at 4-H Club Day on March 23 so everyone has an opportunity to vote for our official 2019 theme! The top three choices are:

4-H is for the Whole Herd FAIRadise Your Adventure Awaits in 4-H

American Legion Family Night

McPherson County 4-H will be the benefitting organization for the June 20 American Legion Family Night! Our responsibilities as 4-H families will be to sell tickets to the event and provide desserts. We will have tickets available after May 16. Tickets will be \$5 each which includes a hamburger, fries, dessert and drink! Please mark this date on your calendars to come eat supper to benefit 4-H! More info will be available after the April 4-H Council Meeting.

Local College Scholarships

Attention High School Seniors! Our McPherson County 4-H Scholarship application is due to the Extension Office by April 1. Thank you to the Development Fund for providing this opporunity! The form can be found online: https://www.mcpherson.ksu.edu/4-h/awards-recognition/scholarships/index.html

4-H Club Day

4-H Club Day registration is due by March 8. Please visit the following link to register for individual events! https://tinyurl.com/MultiCoClubDayInd . https://tinyurl.com/MultiCoClubDayGroup for any club or group events.

1-H Calandar

Guidelines for categories can be found at: https://www.mcpherson.k-state.edu/4-h/events There will also be Pickle Power and Horticulture Judging at this event! Come participate and also support your fellow 4-H members! Each club will also be asked to provide Room Monitors for morning events.



1 U Council

Registration Opens: January 21st Registration Closes: March 8th

Individual Link: https://tinyurl.com/MultiCoClubDayInd Group Link: https://tinyurl.com/MultiCoClubDayGroup



SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

All McPherson County 4-H members are eligible for a scholarship to help with the cost of camp. (Mark yes during registration when asked if you have a scholarship code). You will then be asked to write a paragraph stating "Why you want to attend camp." Upon submitting, you will see a coupon code. Exit from the paragraph page and complete your camp registration with the coupon code. Members attending regular camp will receive \$73 off the price of camp and Rookies will receive \$43. Thank you to the Tractor Supply Paper Clover Campaign for these extra funds to help with the cost of camp!

3rd-7th Graders

Four action-packed days await 4-H'ers ready for exploring Rock Springs 4-H Center, June 14-17. Meet new and old friends to enjoy swimming, canoeing, horseback riding and more when you sign up for 4-H camp. Who can go? 4-H members and their friends who will be completing grades 3-7 may attend. The cost of camp is \$223 without the scholarship.

1st-2nd Graders- Rookie Camp

Come one come all 1st and 2nd graders for an overnight camp. We will again have two Rookie Camp sessions. Once registered you will be asked if either of the sessions (June 14-15 or June 16-17) will NOT work into your summer schedule. You will be notified once registration closes which session you will attend. We will make every effort to accomodate schedule requests, but no session is gauranteed. Each camper is only allowed to attend ONE session. Enjoy swimming, camp activites, crafts and more! The cost of camp will be \$108 without the scholarship.

<u>REGISTRATION</u>— All registration for camp will be done ONLINE again this year! This will include registration information, scholarship paragraph for 4-H members, health profile and payment by credit card or electronic check. Registration is set to open March 1. You can find registration at: https://app.campdoc.com/register/ozsome

Registration Notes:

If you are a current McPherson County 4-H Member mark YES when asked if you have a scholarship code. This will bring up more information on how to write a paragraph and receive your code!

You will be asked if you would like to add "Travel Protection" to your camp fee. This is a service offered by Camp Doc NOT by 4-H. We already provide extra insurance the entire time at camp plus travel if you are riding the bus. There is an option to simply decline this extra Travel Protection Offer.

After you complete registration you must still complete the CAMPER PROFILE for each camper. This includes personal and health info as well as T-Shirt size and roommate requests. PLEASE get this done ASAP after registration!!

Wanted: Camp Counselors

If you are currently an 8th grader or older...we need YOU! <u>Camp Counselors</u> are 8th through 12th graders (preference given to older youth). Camp will be June 14-17. Counselor applications will be done online and due April 26. All counselor applicants <u>must</u> attend the Counselor Training on June 13-14 at Rock Springs. There will be <u>no cost</u> for the camp counselors this year. Complete Application at: https://tinyurl.com/MPCounselor



Discovery Days

Discovery Days will be held May 29 - 31, 2019. (Note new Wednesday- Friday Schedule!) Registration forms will be available in early March. Discovery Days is open to anyone 13 and older before January 1, 2019 and is held on the K-State Campus in Manhattan. For information, please call the Extension Office or check the state website at <u>www.kansas4-h.org</u>.

Project News

Beef - Beef tagging and weigh in will be by appointment this year. Available times will be April 4 from 3 pm to 6:30 pm and April 5 from 9 am to 1 pm. Please call or email Lindsey for a time. All market animals must be tagged. We can tag any breeding animals at this time as well.

Dog - There will be a kick-off meeting on Thursday, March 7 at 6:30 PM. We will meet at the Extension Office without dogs for this first meeting to talk about the year and set a schedule. If you are interested in this project please make sure to enroll on 4-H Online so you receive informational emails.

Sheep/Meat Goats - Weigh-In and Tagging will take place in the Fairgrounds Block Building from 3:30 to 6:00 pm on Friday, April 26. Please make arrangements to have all your market animals there that day to be tagged!

Swine - Swine Tagging will take place on the fairgrounds on Thursday April 25 from 4:30-7:00 PM.

Leadership Challenge - The deadline for Leadership Challenge Applications is April 1. This is a great chance for you to work on something in leadership that interests you! If you would like to participate, but do not have a project idea, let Lindsey know and she will brainstorm with you! The challenge consists of a plan, carrying out the project, an evaluation and interview. There are cash prizes involved for winners! Find the form online or at the Extension Office!

SpaceTech - 4-H members (12-19-years-old), parents, volunteer 4-H leaders, Extension staff, and educators working with youth who are interested in 4-H rocketry and unmanned aerial systems project areas are invited to a Kansas 4-H SpaceTech training on Saturday, April 27, at the KSU Polytechnic Campus in Salina. To find the information, visit: https://www.kansas4-h.org/events-activities/volunteer-trainings/spacetech/index.html. Registration will be on-line and closes April 15, 2019, 11:59 p.m. The registration fee of \$25.00 includes lunch, breaks, two workshops, workshop materials and training team costs.

Youth Livestock Quality Assurance - REQUIRED

Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) is a new national, multi-species youth livestock quality assurance program. It is open to youth 8-21 years of age and focuses on food safety, animal well-being, and character development. Starting in 2019 this training will be required yearly for all Beef, Sheep, Swine and Goat exhibitors prior to the 4-H Fair. We will offer some in person trainings as well as an option to complete online. This is also required for state shows. Watch your email and future newsletters for more info and training opportunities!

Livestock ID's

Are due into the Office on May 1. Horse ID's require a signature from an agent and must have photos. (You must bring in the original ID for a signature, not a copy). So make sure you get these filled out and turned into the office sooner rather than later. Late ID's will not be accepted. This includes beef, sheep, swine, dairy, horse, dairy goat, and meat goat.



Exceptions to this are rabbit and poultry. Poultry do not have an ID form rather they will go through testing prior to the fair and receive bands to put on. Rabbit ID's are due June 1.

K-State Animal Sciences Leadership Academy

The annual intensive 4 day educational experience (June 5-8) will focus on increasing the participants knowledge of a dynamic and sustainable livestock industry and its importance to a global food system. Students (9th-12th grade) will learn valuable leadership skills and enhance their personal development.

The program's itinerary will feature interactive workshops, tours and faculty mentor time with animal science professors. Industry leaders will also join the participants frequently to share their knowledge and expertise. Throughout the week, participants will work in teams to evaluate current events within the animal science industry and educate others.

This program has a very limited enrollment. More information and applications for the experience are available at http://bit.ly/KSUASILeadershipAcademy . Applications are due April 1.



Living Well

Jana McKinney County Extension Agent Family & Consumer Science



Stay Strong, Stay Healthy

Stay Healthy, Stay Strong

Stay Strong, Stay Healthy (SSSH) is an evidence-based, eight-week exercise program for older and sedentary, middle-aged adults. The hour long class meets twice each week, and includes strengthening exercises. Participants learn the exercises and begin to improve strength and balance. After eight weeks, participants are encouraged to continue this program at home or with a community group. Participants will help determine the class time. Three pieces of equipment are used: a chair, hand weights and adjustable ankle weights. Weights will be provided for class participants to use. If interested, please contact Jana at 620-241-1523 or email at <u>imckinne@ksu.edu</u> This program is \$20.00 and location is determined on location interest!

The classes are held twice a week, with at least one day between sessions. The lifting time is guided by those interested in participating. If you are interested in getting a group together, please give Jana a call at 620-241-1523. **Registration is required in advance.** Forms are available at the Extension Office. This is a fun way to exercise! It's never too late to increase your strength and flexibility. We will start slow and you can build at your own pace. Class lasts about 1 hour including warm-up and cool down.



Turning 65 soon? Jana is a Senior Health Insurance Counselor of Kansas (SHICK) and is willing to meet with you to help you understand the basics of Medicare. We'll discuss the different Parts (A,B,C and D) plus the supplemental insurance options you have. This is a free, unbiased, confidential meeting to help Medicare beneficiaries understand the options available.

As more and more people turn 65 each day, SHICK volunteers are needed. Would you be willing to learn more about Medicare to help others as they turn 65? The training is free – the satisfaction gained from helping others is priceless! Please, consider volunteering with the SHICK program. For more information, contact Jana at 620-241-1523.

March 17 - May 11, 2019



Start a Team! Gather 6 people (including yourself) who will motivate and encourage each other on this journey. The first thing you will do is connect with your team to choose a team name and select a goal (one of the three Walk Kansas challenges.) Use the online platform available when you register for Walk Kansas to stay connected, or find other way that works for your team. Team mates do not need to walk or do activities together – they can if

they want to. As a captain, it is your role to see that team members interact and connect regularly in some way.

Choose a Challenge: Each team chooses one of these challenges. As your team moves through your selected trail, learn about points of interest through the online map.

Challenge 1) Each person reaches the minimum goal for physical activity -- 150 minutes per week. Collectively, the team would walk 423 miles, the distance across the state.

Challenge 2) A winding trail from Troy to Elkhart, requiring each person to log 4 hours per week, traveling 763 miles total.

Challenge 3) Walk the perimeter of Kansas, 1200 miles, each person logs 6 hours per week.



Register for Walk Kansas! Online registration is open. Please select a very simple password for your team. Something even as simple as first names or McPherson. The password is not a security issue; just an access password.

To Register: <u>www.walkkansas.org</u>, My Walk Kansas from the left hand side of the screen, and then, Register. Or, we have the paper forms at the Extension Office. It is \$8.00 per participant, t-shirts are available if interested and can be ordered throughout the program offering. Team Captains are free!

During the 8 weeks, you will log and report minutes of physical activity and the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat. This can be one of the most important tools for making lifestyle changes. Recording progress keeps you focused on your goals. Walk Kansas participants tell us that reporting each week is a powerful motivator because they know their team is depending on each person do their part. Registration is requested by March 13, 2019.

A variety of activities count toward Walk Kansas goals. Anything you do for 10 consecutive minutes or more, at a moderate or vigorous intensity, can count. Strengthening exercises also count and these activities are part of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

Healthy eating, including beverage choices, also plays a key role in reducing your risk of chronic disease. During Walk Kansas, you will also keep track of fruits and vegetables you eat. How much is enough? For most adults, the recommendation is approximately 1 ½ cups of fruit and 2 ½ cups of vegetables daily. The amount varies depending on your age, sex and level of physical activity.

Each participant will receive a weekly newsletter with healthful lifestyle information and a recipe.

Small Steps = Big Rewards

Changing a few choices each day can help create a healthier lifestyle. Small steps can bring big rewards, and participation in Walk Kansas could be the motivation you need to get started

Falls – A Cause for Concern



The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control reports that one in three adults ages 65 and older fall each year. From 90 to 95 percent of older adults who break a hip do so in a fall. Twenty-five percent of older adults who break a hip typically die from complications such as pneumonia within six months.

The natural aging process – changes in vision, loss of muscle tone, coordination or flexibility, and bones that become more brittle with each year – can make older adults more vulnerable than the general population. Here are tips to reduce the risk of falling.

- 1. Ask your health care provider for a "fall assessment," which typically tests balance and assesses walking style or "gait," and if a fall prevention program or clinic is available in your community. If not, ask how you might help develop such a program or clinic. If your health care provider recommends using a cane or walker for added stability, use it.
- 2. Make a commitment to exercise, either individually or with a group, to maintain, strengthen and improve muscle tone, flexibility and balance.
- 3. Review medications at least annually, as side effects from prescribed or over-the-counter medications can impair senses and increase risks of accident and injury.
- 4. Make changes in the home. Eliminate clutter, remove throw or scatter rugs that often are at fault in a fall, and install grab bars by the toilet, shower and bath tub. Use non-skid mats in the shower and tub, use night lights, and install a bedside telephone if you don't already have one.

Leave some tasks, such as cleaning the gutters or climbing a ladder to change a light bulb, to younger people – or a professional.

Caregiving....Can be Stressful

Thanks to advances in medical care, people with a chronic illness often can live with and manage the illness successfully and not need a nursing home or assisted living. Many will, however, need a caregiver.

How can a caregiver balance caregiving with other responsibilities, such as work and family?

- * Invest time in learning about the illness and what to expect as it progresses.
- * Make a list of daily, weekly and monthly caregiving tasks, and update the care plan as the disease progresses.
- * Check potential healthcare benefits and local agencies that provide in-home medical care and services.
- * Keep the family (and those who need to know) up to date.
- * Don't think you need to go it alone. Involve family and friends who live close by, but those who may not live close may contribute time paying bills, doing paperwork, money for lawn or housecleaning service, or respite care.
- * Reserve time for self and normal activities, as much as possible.

Quality of life is an issue for the care recipient and the caregiver. While the care recipient is typically the focus, failure to assist the caregiver may result in worse physical health and increase vulnerability to illness.

Kitchen for Rent - Commercial Space for Licensed Individuals

Incubator kitchens, which are food facilities that have multiple users, can be a good resource for small food business startups. The overhead costs of using an incubator kitchen can be much lower than renovating, building, or renting a facility. Many incubator kitchens also have commercial equipment that might be cost prohibitive for a small startup. For "cottage food" (foods made at home for sale directly to the end consumer) businesses, the incubator kitchen provides a separation from personal use kitchens.

If you are a small business in need of a commercial kitchen, this resource is for you! Find other Kansas incubator kitchens available at:

http://agriculture.ks.gov/docs/default-source/fsl--handouts/incubator-kitchen--vertical2017.pdf?sfvrsn=8



Clutter is a family affair! Choose a convenient time for everyone to discuss plans for clutter control. It is unfair to expect one person to restore order. All family members share the responsibility for picking up after themselves.

Make Time. Set aside several Saturday mornings to work as a family on big cleanups. In each room, start at one spot and work clockwise around the room until you reach your starting point. Use the box approach to sort the clutter. Sort items into boxes labeled *Keep*, *Store*, *Give Away/Sell*, *Throw Away* and, if you are indecisive, you can use a fifth box labeled Maybe.

Maintaining a Clutter-Free Home. Everyone needs to do a little bit every day. It is everyone's "job" to keep items picked up and put away. Tasks need to be appropriate for family members' ages and abilities. Share your ideas and expectations of what is expected and acceptable. You may need to teach others simple and effective ways to do the tasks.

Everyone's Plan for Success. What are everyone's daily and weekly responsibilities? What are the acceptable standards? What are the consequences if the jobs are not completed?

A word of caution: Some members may object. Stay firm and do not do their share of the work or you will end up getting it back! It will take at least 2 to 4 weeks until the jobs become routine. You will need to be patient. The reward is worth the work. When youth and adults help with household work, they learn to carry out tasks, accept responsibility, and help others. They may develop a sense of "can do," which builds self confidence.

Now is a great time to get started...it's early in 2019. Make it a goal to work on reducing clutter in your home. But remember, you didn't get all the clutter overnight; so it's not going to go away quickly either. However, if you work at it together on a regular basis, you will soon be happy with the results.

Smart Uses for Your Tax Refund

A tax refund can have a real impact on your personal and financial well-being. Before you spend that hard earned money on a new sofa or vacation, look at these suggestions.



How Should I Spend My Money?

1. *Pay Off Bills* - First priority are regular monthly bills (utilities, phone, etc) an then those with the highest interest rate. If you owe \$2,000 on a credit card (18% interest) and pay \$50 a month, it will take 5 years to pay it off and you'll pay \$1,077 in interest. Will you even still have the items that you charged 5 years from now?

If you use your tax refund to pay off \$1,000 and continue to pay \$50 a month, the bill will be paid in 2 years and you'll save \$879 in interest.

- 2. Save Needs in the Coming Year Try to save enough money to get you through a couple of months if you had unexpected car repairs or medical expenses, or lost your job (Emergency Funds). Avoid big bills like holiday spending by building up savings now (Occasional Expenses).
- 3. Long-term Savings Your tax refund can help you plan for future goals like a home or a comfortable retirement. Adding \$500 a year into an IRA retirement account can yield \$68,100 after 30 years. If you add \$25 to the yearly \$500 contribution you could have \$113,800 for a retirement nest egg! You may save even more in taxes by contributing to a tax deferred IRA or a Roth IRA that is tax-free when your retire.

Plan ahead – without a plan, you may use the money on the first thing that comes to mind and later realize something else was more important.

Identify all the possibilities – think big and involve your family in the process!

Devote a portion to build long-term financial security.

Don't throw away part of your refund on loan fees - "Quick Refund" companies are just giving you a high-cost loan! A little patience can save you big bucks.

4. *Special Purchases* - Ask yourself, do I NEED or WANT that new refrigerator, TV or sofa? These may be essential or can be delayed until you save for that specific item.

Your Best Bet: Put some of your tax refund toward financial security by paying off debt, planning for the year ahead and setting aside for your goals.



Ag News

Shad Marston County Extension Agent Agriculture and Natural Resources



Tractor Safety Course

Saturday, March 16, 2019 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Prairieland Partners 2401 E. Northview Rd McPherson KS 67460 RSVP by March 11, email Terra <u>tregehr@ksu.edu</u> Cost: \$15.00

A multi County Tractor Safety course has been scheduled for March 16th starting at 8:30 at Prairieland Partners John Deere here in McPherson. Do you know of a 14 or 15 year old student that needs a tractor operator's permit, required by the Child Labor Regulations in regard to agricultural hazardous occupations before they can be employed to operate a tractor This class will enable youth to get their permit to work on a farm, driving a tractor this spring and/or summer.

Lunch will be provided that day by Praireland Partners LLC. Students will need to register at the McPherson County Extension Office to get the tractor safety book ordered and you can do that by coming in or calling 241-1523 by March 11.

Chemical Weed Control Book

The new K-State 2019 Chemical Weed Control Guide is now available.

Use this as a guide because this publication provides suggestions for chemical weed control in several major crops, but also includes pastures, rangeland, and noncropland.

Hard copies of this publication will be available here at the Extension office or you can use this link for the new Weed Control Guide online

Master Gardeners & Friends Educational Meeting N



March 28 – 7:00 p.m. Extension Office Meeting Room 600 West Woodside, McPherson KS

- Topic: Native Plants in "Urban Gardens" and "Gardening for Pollinators"
- Speaker: Jason Graves, Central Kansas District Horticulturist Specialist

Mark your calendar for the April meeting.....

April 25 – 7:00 p.m. Extension Office Meeting Room 600 West Woodside, McPherson KS

Topic: Herbs and or Organic Weeds & Pest Management

Speaker: Ariel Whitely-Noll

Master Farmer Master Farm Homemaker Award

Congratulations to Jim and Mim Nelson of Windom and their entire family for being selected as members of the 2018 Class of Kansas Master Farmers and Master Farm Homemakers. This prestigious selection is believed to be the highest honor which can be accorded to a Kansas farm couple. McPherson County has produced a long list of Master Farmers and Master Farm Homemakers that was first started in 1927. This is a great honor representing McPherson County for a most deserving Kansas farm family, The Nelson's.

Feeding Calving Cows at Night

Shad Marston Ag Agent, McPherson County

Have you ever heard the old saying, "Feeding cows in the evening, instead of in the morning, will cause the majority of calves to be born during daylight hours?" Not every cattle operation follows this practice, but can it help?

Research done at Kansas State University over a five-year period, involving 537 births, documented 85.4% of calves born between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., when cows were fed in the evening (between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.). Many studies have been done in the Unites States over the years, with similar results. Nobody knows why it works, only that it does. Here are some of my thoughts of why I believe that feeding calving cows at night can make them calve more in the day time.

All cattle like to have a daily routine. If you monitor cattle, they seem to rest and stand at the same area of their pen, eat at the same bunk and lay in the same part of the pen each day. Cattle divide a 24-hour period about equally in eating, resting and ruminating. My thoughts are that having a daily routine is a key factor for leading the calving time to daylight hours and should be started at least a couple of weeks prior to calving dates. Note that weather, an upcoming storm, sparks calving and can disrupt the timing of calving, as well.

Now, let's turn our thoughts toward the mind of a beef cow. So after cattle have been resting and ruminating by day, they become hungry by night. When cattle are hungry, that's their main concern. A toot of a horn, the starting of a tractor or the lights turned on in the barn, can be signs to the cow that it's feeding time. That's all hungry cows are thinking about and maybe, not so much about calving. Furthermore, after finishing a daily ration, cattle need to rest and ruminate for long hours at a time. Some even make a second trip to the hay feeders to get their fill. Now, let's think about that for just a moment. Eating for 2-3 hours then resting for another six, would be 8-9 hours total for this process. Which is pretty much the length of the night time hours. Here is a timeline example of a typical night when I worked at the KSU Purebred Beef Barn during college. Hopefully it will explain some of my thoughts of day time calving.

At the Purebred unit, we fed all Flying K branded first calf heifers (Angus, Hereford and Simmental) at night. The daily crew put the feed out while during evening chores but we didn't open the gate to the bunks until the night watchman started his night shift. With only six night watchmen on our list, each got a different night of the week. That was not fun if you got the weekend shift or back to back nights, but those beef barn stories are for a different article.

Each night, the designated night watchman started his check by opening the gate to the feeding pen at 10:00 p.m. sharp. All heifers would be standing, gathered by the gate, easy to check and look at for signs of calving. Once the gate was opened, the heifers would head to the bunks and hay rings for their nightly ration of grain and hay. We checked heifers every two hours and moved any heifers that had calved to a different pen after tagging and weighing their calves. The pen of heifers got smaller as the calving season went on. The night watchman always had to call the KSU herdsman if a heifer started calving. Having to call for assistance in the middle of the night wasn't the funnest, or the most popular phone call to make. Our next check was at midnight and most heifers had long finished up their grain and were working on their hay ration for the night. By 2:00 p.m. most of the cattle would be lying down and resting after their meal. At 4:00 a.m., cattle would still be lying down, chewing their cud in the bedded part of the feeding pen or some getting their second fill at the hay rings. At the 6:00 a.m. check, the night check was over for the lucky college student that was assigned night watch after he moved them back to their day pen. I remember most were headed to the gate when they heard you coming down the lane to move them over. Again, sticking to their daily routine.

Now I'm not saying this leads to calving 100% in the daytime hours, but I noted the difference. A lot of the heifers started showing the first signs of labor towards the end of the night watchman's shift. A first time calving heifer routinely took a little longer to actively start pushing and develop into full labor, mainly at or around the beautiful Flint Hills sunrise. I remember coming to work each day and our first task of the daily crew would be to help assist a heifer in the birthing process. A good majority of the calves were born during the mornings (6:00 a.m. to noon) of my two calving seasons as a crew member at the KSU Purebred Beef Barn. This is knowledge I will never forget and certainly always value as part of my animal husbandry experience.

Now, why should cattlemen care when calves are born? Ideally, because cows that need assistance during the calving process will more likely to be detected during the day light verses in the dark, in most cow/calf operations. Assistance can be provided at the most opportune time frame for the health and survival of both cow and calf. Most husband and wives of cattlemen agree, that is during the daylight hours.

Spring weather outlook for Kansas

Winter has had a tight hold over February weather. The outlook for March (the first part of the month) calls for an increased chance of cooler-than-normal temperatures across the state. The signal is strongest in the northeast, and weakest in the southwest. The precipitation pattern for March is less clear, with equal chances of above-normal, normal, or below-normal amounts. A normal or slightly below normal precipitation pattern for March would be favorable in the eastern divisions, where saturated soils continue to linger from the excessive fall moisture. Cool temperatures would slow the normal drying pattern. If that is coupled with wetter-than-normal conditions, planting delays could be a problem. In addition, flooding could be an issue as many streams, ponds, and reservoirs are full. We will have more details on soil moisture and possible issues next week.

As the outlook is expanded to include the entire spring season, the temperature outlook switches to a neutral pattern, with equal chances for above-normal, normal or below-normal temperatures. However, this does not indicate how those temperatures might be distributed. A big concern would be a repeat of the 2018 pattern, where much colder-than-normal temperatures prevailed in April, to be quickly replaced by much warmer-than-normal temperatures in May. This narrowed the reproductive period for winter wheat, with a negative impact on yield.

There is a slight chance for above-normal precipitation state-wide for the period. Again, this does not indicate the distribution pattern. A slightly drier-than-normal March or April that allows for an adequate planting window would actually be favorable in the eastern divisions. The western third of the state has drier soil moistures at the surface, and would benefit more from a normal precipitation pattern.

While an El Niño has been officially declared, it continues to be weak. An El Niño generally favors wetter-than-normal conditions in the Central Plains. However, the El Niño signal has its weakest correlation in the spring season. Impacts are more likely to be the result of an active Madden Julian Oscillation, which results in increased frequency of storm systems. This increases the chance of normal to above-normal precipitation in Kansas. Additionally, there is a positive pattern in the Arctic Oscillation which is forecasted to continue through the next few weeks. This makes cold intrusions into the Plains more likely and is known to phase polar/subtropical jet streams across the U.S. resulting in stronger storm systems.





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