

# CARTER COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES NEWSLETTER

**DECEMBER 2019**



University of Kentucky  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
Cooperative Extension Service

## Cooperative Extension Service

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Grayson, KY 41143  
(606) 474-6686  
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extension.ca.uky.edu

## ORDER WINTER GROUP MINERALS NOW!

We are now taking orders for the winter group mineral order. Hinton Mills has won the bid this time and will be providing two minerals for you to choose from. These are custom blends that will be blended by Ridley Four Seasons. One is a complete cow/calf UK IRM mineral containing high magnesium for \$16.50 per 50-pound bag. The second is a complete cow/calf mineral containing high magnesium plus Rumensin for \$20.50 per 50-pound bag. Rumensin is an ionophore that helps ruminant animals digest and utilize forages more efficiently. Magnesium is added now to help prevent hay tetany during the winter and helps to prevent grass tetany during the lush grass growth of early spring.



Please note that both magnesium and Rumensin have a bitter taste that can affect palatability. When mixed together mineral intake may be decreased. These products are not recommended for sheep, goats or Jersey cattle due to potential copper toxicity. Also, Rumensin is toxic to horses.

Mineral orders must be placed by Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup> by calling the Carter County Extension Office at 474-6686. Minerals can be picked up at Hinton Mills or at the Carter County Extension Office at 9:00 AM on Friday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>.



## APPLE & PEAR ROOTSTOCK

We are also taking orders for M7A apple and pear rootstock for spring grafting. All rootstock is \$1 each. This program enables small fruit producers to group orders and purchase the rootstock at a cheaper price. Orders will be taken until February 1st or until sold out. Payment must be made at the time of ordering. Checks can be made payable to the Carter County Extension Office.

Like Carter County Agriculture Extension Service on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CCESAG/>

Have an idea for an upcoming program or topic you would like to see covered? Let us know about it!

For additional information about topics covered in this newsletter contact the Carter County Extension Office at 474-6686 or [Rebecca.k@uky.edu](mailto:Rebecca.k@uky.edu).

Sincerely,

Rebecca Konopka, Carter County Extension Agent for Agriculture & Natural Resources Education

Cooperative Extension Service  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Family and Consumer Sciences  
4-H Youth Development  
Community and Economic Development

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LEXINGTON, KY 40546



Disabilities  
accommodated  
with prior notification.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

All events held at the Carter County Extension Office unless otherwise noted.

## FORESTRY WEBINARS

7:00 PM -8:30 PM

**February 6: Woodland Management: What is Right for You and Your Woodland?** Managing your woodlands to grow healthy forests and produce revenue depends on making the right choices for your location. This session will help woodland owners to understand how stand dynamics and market considerations are used in the application of management. Counts for Kentucky Master Logger Continuing Education Credits.

**February 13: Understanding the Financial Aspects of Woodland Management.** This session provides an overview of financial factors that affect your woodland management such as when to re-plant, when to thin, when to harvest, when to use cost-share programs and more. Counts for Kentucky Master Logger Continuing Education Credits.

**February 20: More than Timber: Income Opportunities from Non-timber Forest Products.** There are a range of possibilities to generate income from your woodlands that depend on your location, forest type and more, that are compatible with timber management too. In this session learn more about the opportunities to generate income from your woodlands.

**February 27: Launching your Woodland Legacy: Intact, In Forest and In Family Ownership.** Most woodland owners cite legacy as one of their main reasons for owning land, and a large majority express concern over their ability to keep the land intact. This session is designed to help you find the best way to pass this legacy intact to your heirs.

**March 5: Kentucky Forestry and Wildlife Assistance: Finding the Help You Need.** Learn about the forestry and wildlife resources and assistance available in Kentucky to help you care for and get the most from your woodlands.



## BEEF QUALITY AND CARE ASSURANCE TRAININGS

The Beef Quality Assurance Program's mission is to maximize consumer confidence in and acceptance of beef by focusing the producer's attention to daily production practices that influence the safety, wholesomeness and quality of beef and beef products through the use of science, research, and education initiatives.

BQA is valuable because it:

- ◇ Shows commitment to food safety and quality
- ◇ Safeguards the public image of the beef and dairy industries
- ◇ Upholds consumer confidence in valuable beef products
- ◇ Improves sale value of marketed beef cattle
- ◇ Enhances herd profitability through better management



### Upcoming Trainings:

Tuesday, January 14 @ 6:00 PM

Friday, January 17 @ 10:00 AM

## LITTLE SANDY BEEKEEPERS

6:00 PM

February 4—Speaker TBD

April 7—Speaker: Dr. Ric Bessin, UK Entomologist

June 2—Speaker: Dr. Shawn Wright, UK Horticulture

Topic: Best Plants for Bees



## NORTHEAST AREA LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATION MEETING

January 30 @ 6:00

Speaker: Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler, UK Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

Topic: Feeding Cows This Winter



# Cow-Calf Profitability Conference

Cow-Calf Profitability Conferences are one day, intensive seminars focusing on key topics for beef producers. Conferences are delivered by UK Agricultural Economics Extension through the Kentucky Beef Network funded by the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board.

Wednesday  
January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

9:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Registration starts at 8am

25 MSU Farm Dr  
Morehead, KY  
40351

**\$10 Registration  
Fee**

CALL 606-474-6686 TO REGISTER

*\*\*\*Please register by January 16<sup>th</sup>*



**UK** University of  
Kentucky  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment

**KBN**  
KENTUCKY BEEF NETWORK

**KADF**  
KENTUCKY AGRICULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT FUND

## Not Too Soon to Think about Calving Season

Calving season will be here before we know it. Providing sound management during that time can mean more live calves, which translates to more profit for you.

It is important to have a short calving period to allow frequent observation and assistance if needed. Some specific things a producer can do to limit calf loss include:

- Separate first-calf heifers from mature cows. Calving difficulty can run as high as 30 to 40 percent for 2-year-old heifers compared to just 3 percent for mature cows. Place them in a small, accessible pasture near a corral where assistance can be given if needed.
- Provide a clean area for calving. The calving area should be a well-sodded pasture or clean, dry maternity pen, not a wet, muddy lot. It should also be large enough for adequate exercise and offer protection from prevailing winds.
- Be familiar with the signs of calving. Within a few hours of calving, cows generally become nervous and uneasy. As contractions increase, a cow will likely wander away from the rest of the herd.
- Check cows frequently. Observing cows three or four times a day and providing assistance when necessary results in more live calves. However, cows should be disturbed as little as possible during labor.
- Know when a cow needs assistance. Intervention is justified when two or three hours have passed without progress or if delivery has not occurred within 90 minutes after the water sac appears. In a normal delivery, the calf's front legs and head will appear first.



There are also a few steps to take after the calf is born to help it get off to a good start. These include making sure the calf is breathing normally after it is delivered and that it consumes colostrum. Ideally, a calf should consume its first milk within 15 to 30 minutes after birth.

Immediately after calving, increase the cow's energy intake to about 16 pounds of total digestible nutrients per day. The extra energy will help the cow produce enough milk for her calf and allow her to rebreed on schedule.

Source: Les Anderson, UK Extension Beef Specialist

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## Body Condition Scores Good Indicators of Herd Health

Early winter is an optimum time to prepare your spring-calving herd for reproductive success. Adequate nutrition from about 50 to 80 days prior to calving is critical to maximizing a cow's ability to rebreed and maintain a 365-day calving interval. If a cow gets inadequate nutrition or is thin at calving and breeding, she will take longer to come into heat and will require more services to conceive.

The best method to evaluate the nutritional status of your herd is to do body condition scores. A body condition score is an estimate of the degree of body fatness of an animal, which gives us an estimate of the amount of body energy reserves available to the cow. Scores range from 1 to 9, with 1 meaning a cow is emaciated or extremely thin, while a 9 is an animal that is extremely obese. Beef producers should train themselves to identify cows that are too thin, cows that are marginal and cows that have an optimal body condition score for rebreeding. Body condition scoring is a tool to help plan your supplemental feeding program so you can maintain adequate productivity in your herd.

You can determine body condition score by looking at the degree of sharpness or thinness in several areas of the cow's body. The ribs and backbone are two primary regions you need to examine to help establish body condition score. Other important areas are the tailhead, shoulder and brisket regions of the cow. In general, cows with more fat appear smoother in these areas to the point that individual bones are difficult to see.

Cows that are too thin, scores of 3 or less, have easily identifiable fore and rear ribs, sharpness across the backbone, sharpness over the hook and pin bones near the tailhead and sharpness across the shoulders. These cows need to gain approximately 150-200 pounds before calving if you want them to rebreed in a timely fashion.

Cows that are borderline have a body condition score of 4. These cows have easily identifiable 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> ribs, but their fore ribs are covered. The backbone and hooks and pins are still prominent but are not sharp in appearance. The shoulders are less defined. These cows need to gain about 75 to 100 pounds before breeding season.

Cows that are in optimal body condition have scores of 5 or 6 and have a good overall appearance. No ribs are visible unless the animal has been shrunk. The backbone, hooks and pins appear rounded and not easily seen and the area around the tailhead is filled in but not mounded. These cows simply need to maintain their weight until calving.

Research has shown that cows with scores less than 5 at calving have lower pregnancy rates and take longer to rebreed than cows with scores of 5 or higher. The optimum body condition score for mature cows is a 5 or 6. Heifers that are calving their first calf need to have a score of at least 6 to maximize rebreeding success.

The best way to use body condition scoring is sort cows according to their score at 90-100 days before calving and feed these groups according to their score and nutrient needs to optimize reproduction. Each body condition score typically represents 75 to 100 pounds of body weight. Analyze your feedstuffs so that you can accurately balance rations to meet the needs of each group of cows. This method not only ensures adequate breeding potential of your cow-herd, but is also an efficient method of supplying nutrients to your cows.



Source: Les Anderson, UK Extension Beef Specialist

## Make Farm Record Keeping a Priority

Record keeping may not be every farmer's favorite activity, and probably not the reason you got into farming as a career. With time, patience and a commitment to get it done, it can make your financial life a lot less worrisome.

Record keeping doesn't have to be stressful. It's a way to discover things about your farm that will help you make better long-term decisions. You can use a ledger book or a computer—whatever helps you maintain consistency. Software programs can make your data more meaningful.

Software has become more user-friendly over time, and while it may not make the record keeping process fun, it could help you see the overall picture of your operation. Some programs track purchases of inputs and how you use the input on a particular enterprise or field. You'll be able to keep track of repair and maintenance records for specific farm equipment and produce balance sheets, income statements and cash flow budgets.

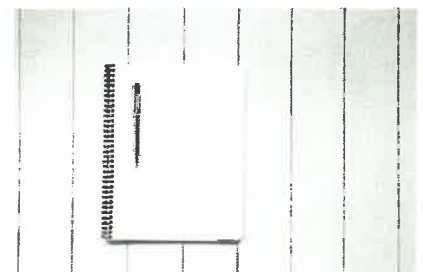
For many livestock operations, a good time to start keeping records is when the veterinarian comes to check the herd. Vets usually charge per head, so that data can help you develop a list of animals that need attention. You can use the same data to develop health histories of your animals, which will lead to more informed exams and diagnosis in the future.

Make record keeping a team effort for your family. Sit down and work on the records and budget together. Perhaps one person can read the information while another person types it into the software program or writes it in the ledger book. Also, if you do a little bit each day and don't save it all up for the end of the year, you won't become overwhelmed.

If you've done the work throughout the year, year-end procedures can feel more satisfying. You can generate year-end reports with a few simple clicks and not have to sort through stacks of bills lying around the home or office.

The University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment's Department of Agricultural Economics has several tools online that could help with budgeting and decision making. Visit <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agecon/index.php?p=29> to see what is available.

Source: Steve Isaacs, UK Extension Agricultural Economist



## Mulching Strawberry Plants

Hopefully, you had a chance to mulch your strawberry plantings before the early winter cold. Mulch helps reduce the freezing and thawing of the soil that breaks off the small roots and in some cases can lift the plants partially out of the ground, translating into smaller berries and reduced yields.

Mulching also slows plant development in the spring which reduces the chances of frost injury to the flowers. Mulch conserves moisture, keeps berries off the ground which reduces rot development and keeps dirt off of the berries. It can also reduce weed development making harvest much nicer under wet conditions.

Wheat straw is the preferred mulch material, but oat and rye straw also work well. Try to acquire mulch that does not contain a lot of weed, wheat, oat or rye seeds as this can substantially increase weed control requirements in the spring. Apply the mulch when the night temperature is expected to reach about 20 degrees F which is usually sometime in mid-December in Kentucky, although this year the lower temperatures have come earlier. Cover the plants so you can still see a number of leaves peeking out from beneath the straw. Excessive mulch can smother plants.

When spring comes, don't hurry mulch removal. The mulch will protect the strawberry fruit buds as long as it remains on the plant. Remove the mulch when the plants have begun to grow and the foliage looks slightly yellow. If the mulch is left on too long, it could substantially reduce your yields.

Source: John Strang, UK Extension fruit and vegetable specialist.



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## Poinsettias for the Holidays

Traditional red and green colors are well represented in the flowers available for the holidays. Poinsettias, the most popular and spectacular holiday flowers, can combine both these colors.

The three to six bloom red poinsettia is the most frequently used, but several other sizes, shapes and colors are available. Colors range from creamy white to yellow through shades of pink to the traditional red. The colorful plant parts often referred to as "flowers" actually are modified leaves called "bracts." The yellow centers are really the "flowers." Some poinsettias have marbled pink and white bracts; others may have pink flecks on red. Poinsettia bracts are very long lasting, providing a nice decorative plant for the holiday season. Consumers can buy miniatures as well as poinsettia trees and hanging baskets.

The poinsettia is not poisonous to people or pets, but is classified as a non-edible plant material. Some people have skin sensitivity to the white milky sap produced when a part of the plant is broken or injured. Ingesting a plant part may cause some discomfort. Active young children, who are apt to put just about anything in their mouths, and curious cats might choke on fibrous poinsettia foliage. Therefore it is a good practice to put poinsettias and all other non-edible plants out of children's and pets' reach.

Poinsettias will remain beautiful far beyond the holiday season when cared for properly.

Keep these tips in mind.

- ⇒ Choose a plant with small, tightly clustered yellow buds in the center and crisp, bright, undamaged foliage.
- ⇒ At home, put the poinsettia in a room with bright, natural light. Ideally, plant foliage should be exposed to direct sunlight one or more hours daily. Avoid locations where there are drafts and close heat sources. Do not put the plant on top of a television set or near a radiator.
- ⇒ Water the plant when the soil becomes dry; drooping leaves may indicate it needs watering. Be sure to discard excess water in the drip saucer.
- ⇒ If you want to keep a poinsettia after the holiday season, fertilize it with ordinary houseplant fertilizer a few weeks after buying it.



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## Liven Up Winter Days with Amaryllis

Few plants can liven up a winter day like the amaryllis. The large pink, white, red, orange and variegated flowers are truly spectacular. You may have received an amaryllis bulb as a holiday gift.

A member of the lily family, the amaryllis rises from a large bulb. The growth habit makes it well suited for blooming during the colder months of the year.

Knowing about its natural habitat in Central and South America will help you successfully grow and flower an amaryllis at home. The plants are adapted to ecosystems with a long, moist growing season, followed by a

shorter dry season. At the beginning of the rainy season, the bulb sends forth foliage and flowers. Although the flowers last only for two to three weeks, the foliage grows throughout the moist season during which time new flower buds form within the bulb. It goes dormant during the dry season, but resumes growth and flowers when the rainy season begins.

When you buy an amaryllis, it likely will be a dormant bulb. If so, pot the bulb about six to 12 weeks before you want the plant to bloom. Use a container with a diameter just slightly larger than the bulb and a potting mix that promotes good drainage. One-third to one-half the pointed end of the bulb should remain above the soil. Thoroughly water and put the pot in a bright, warm window.

Water when the soil becomes dry to the touch, but do not give it too much water because this will cause the bulb to rot. Never allow water to accumulate in the saucer beneath the pot.

In a few weeks, a flower stalk should emerge, usually before the foliage develops. Rotate the container every few days to keep the flower and foliage from leaning too much toward the light. You may need to stake the flower stalk to keep it upright in a low-light situation.

When the bloom is spent, remove the wilted flowers and cut the flower stalk back to the top of the bulb. Do not remove any foliage because the leaves continue to provide energy for the next season's flowers. Fertilize it every couple of weeks to promote healthy foliage.



If you want to keep the amaryllis and get it to bloom again next year, give the plant as much light as possible after it flowers. It will help to move the plant outdoors when the danger of frost is over, generally around mid-May. Gradually acclimate the plant to brighter light by first putting it under a tree or awning; then moving it to brighter light every few days until the plant is in full sun.

When summer is over, keep the plant in a sunny location, but withhold water. As the foliage begins to die, move the pot to a cool, dry location such as a basement or closet. In the winter, repot the bulb to a new container, again only a few inches larger than the bulb's diameter. As an amaryllis bulb becomes larger, it may produce two or even three flower spikes during the blooming period.

Source: Richard Durham, Horticulture Extension Professor

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## Mistletoe: Tree Thief, Holiday Tradition

Once autumn leaves have fallen, mistletoe becomes highly visible on large trees throughout Kentucky. *Phoradendron*, the scientific name for this parasitic plant, means tree thief. You can commonly find these small leafy plants on twigs and branches of many hardwood species in the southern two-thirds of the United States. Mistletoes extract water, mineral elements and food from their host tree by way of a parasite nutrient-uptake organ; hence the name, tree thief.

Mistletoes' use in holiday traditions has roots in pagan times. Its parasitic nature and the fact that it appears to be alive while the host tree appears dead, led some to believe mistletoe mysteriously held the life of the tree during winter. Druids harvested mistletoe in a special rite, never letting the plant touch the ground, then hung it in their homes for good luck.

Our modern-day mistletoe holiday tradition likely originates with a mythological Norse goddess of love and beauty. Frigga, whose son was restored from possible death by mistletoe, was thought to bestow a kiss on anyone walking beneath one. Today, when two people meet under the mistletoe, tradition suggests they must exchange a kiss for good luck.



*Phoradendron*, the most common mistletoe growing in Kentucky, resembles another species that grows in Europe. It has simple, fleshy green leaves arranged oppositely on the stem. Stems are short and more branched than the host tree, so mistletoe often appears as a spherical bunch of dense vegetation. These bunches may be a foot or two in diameter and are located high in the tree for better sunlight exposure. Mistletoe berries range from white to straw-colored to light red. Birds eat the fruits, reportedly toxic to human and animals, then deposit the seeds onto branches where they germinate and penetrate the host tree.

Since birds tend to roost in open-grown trees, mistletoes do not appear as frequently in forest trees. Generally, they do not cause much damage, although they can be harmful to a tree already under stress. If mistletoe appears on landscape trees or other trees in the urban forest, you can control it through pruning.

Source: John Hartman, Plant Pathology Professor



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Carter County Agriculture &  
Natural Resources Newsletter

December 2019

Merry Christmas!

\*\*Group Mineral Order  
Information Inside\*\*

