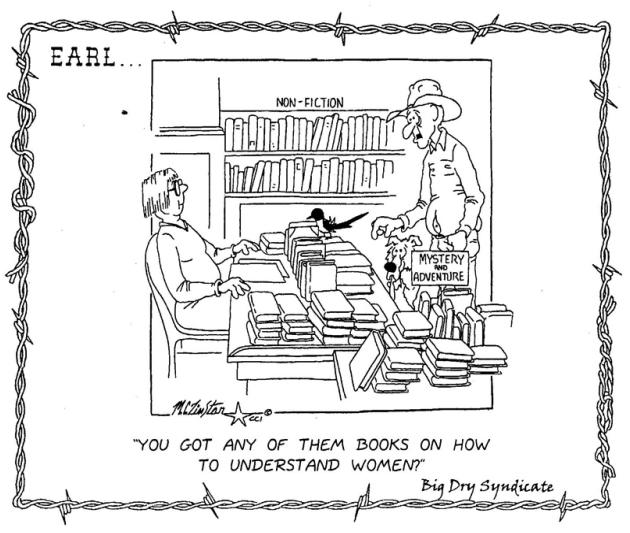

Sorghum Weed Control Guide Available

BROOKINGS — The 2015 Sorghum Weed Control Guide is available at iGrow.org and a hard copy can be picked up at any SDSU Extension Regional Office.

More than 50 products are labeled for South Dakota and can be found in the guide. This guide highlights the various modes of action available to growers to control weeds in sorghum.

The guide includes all of the latest products registered as well as any changes to existing labels. The guide also includes a weed response chart as well as a crop response ratings.

Check the guide out for yourself by visiting http://.iGrow.org/up/resources/03-3013-2015.pdf.

Army Cutworms Spotted In Winter Wheat

BROOKINGS — Army cutworms have been spotted feeding on winter wheat seedlings in fields located southwest of Wall.

"The early spring and warm temperatures helped the greening of winter wheat fields all over South Dakota also favoring the insect's development," said Anitha Chirumamilla, SDSU Extension Entomology Field Specialist.

Chirumamilla explained that fields planted early last fall could have higher chances of army cutworm infestation as lots of growth before dormancy attracts adult moths that lay their eggs in the soil.

"Army cutworm, Euxoa auxiliaris is a very common species of cutworms attacking wheat in South Dakota," she said.

The larvae are greyish in color with pale markings and a light stripe on their backs. Adult moths lay eggs in the soil during fall season and overwinter as larvae.

With the onset of spring, the larvae resume their development by feeding on the seedlings. Full grown larvae can be 2-inches long. "Damage is caused by larvae feeding on the leaves. Most of the damage occurs during evening hours as the larvae are sensitive to light and hide in the soil near the plants during the day," Chirumamilla said.

Larvae can be seen during daytime on cloudy days.

USDA Rural Dev. Launches New Website

WASHINGTON — USDA Rural Development has launched a new website to enhance program accessibility and customer service.

The new website (www.rd.usda.gov) features quicker and more intuitive access to programs, simplified site navigation, and information about services and staff contacts in every state office. The site also provides easily accessible resources for loan and grant applications, eligibility information and program descriptions.

"We invite the public, local governments, businesses, rural residents, non-profit organizations and anyone interested in the future of rural communities to visit the website," USDA Under Secretary Lisa Mensah said. "The site can now be easily accessed on Smartphones and tablets, making Rural Development program information and applications for funding more accessible than ever."

Other website features include:

• A listing of all programs (http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs)

• Access to program Regulations and Guidelines (http://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/regulations-guidelines)

• Prominent housing lender notices on state websites

• A Directory of State Offices (http://www.rd.usda.gov/browse-state)

Future enhancements to the site will include Spanish language descriptions of programs.

USDA Rural Development administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure programs through a national network of state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

TRAN Tractor Relay Slated For Area

The Nebraska Antique Farming Association has set the route for the 2015 Tractor Relay Across Nebraska (TRAN).

Back in 2012, the antique tractor association planned for the first annual tractor ride, a nine-day excursion across the state of Nebraska from west to east. Now three years later, for the first time, the TRAN will travel through Northeast Nebraska.

The planned Itinerary for the 2015 Relay Across Nebraska is as follows:

• May 30 — Harrison to Chadron;
• May 31 — Chadron to Gordon;
• June 1 — Gordon to Cody;
• June 2 — Cody to Valentine;
• June 3 — Valentine to Springview;
• June 4 _ Springview to Spencer;
• June 5 — Spencer to Crofton;
• and June 6 — Crofton to Yankton (S.D.) for Tri-State Old Iron Association Show.

The TRAN organizers offer options when registering for the eight-day, 400-mile, 2015 TRAN ride. Antique tractor riders can sign up for the complete trip or any segment or day they desire. Some drivers only participate in the relay in the areas where they live.

Another aspect of the TRAN event is the support of Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW). OCW is an organization sponsored by the American Legion dedicated to raising funds for Disabled Veterans for comfort items not normally provided by the government. Items they supply include sweat pants, DVDs, puzzles, electronic devices, books, calling cards and much more.

Many times communities along the TRAN route sponsor fundraisers for the OCW, and the proceeds are appreciated.

If enjoying antique farming equipment and tractors is a hobby, check out http://www.antiquefarming.org/ for more information or 2015 TRAN registration forms, or call Donelle Moormeier: 402-429-2480, Relay Chairman; or Howard Raymond : 308-650-1527, NAFA Secretary.

Limited Improvement In Climate Outlooks: NOAA

BROOKINGS — Dry conditions are likely to stay with us in the near term. Some hope exists in the long-term outlook released by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center April 16, 2015 which shows potential improvement this summer.

"The new U.S. Drought Monitor map released April 16 reflected the continuing issues across the state with moderate drought (D1) areas expanding across northern, western and far eastern South Dakota. Nearly 66 percent of the state is now covered by moderate drought conditions," said Dennis Todey, South Dakota State Climatologist and SDSU Extension Climate Specialist.

Todey explained that in addition to looking at moisture levels, the drought monitor also looks to see if there are impacts from drought showing up in crops and streamflows. The current monitor shows that the continued lack of statewide precipitation has impacted both our state's winter wheat crop and streamflows. Statewide, Todey said January 2015 through March 2015 has been the driest on record. The month of March was the second driest on record.

"Drought impacts in South Dakota are still not huge, but starting to mount," Todey said. "Streamflows in many places in the state are falling below average for this time of year. Although there are multiple factors which cause fires, certainly the current very dry conditions statewide have exacerbated the situation with a few large and numerous smaller fires across the state."

WINTER WHEAT IMPACTED BY DRY CONDITIONS

Todey said winter wheat has been the largest crop impacted by the dry conditions. "Some crop losses in winter wheat are already being reported due to combinations of the dryness and winterkill caused by extreme cold with lack of snow cover this winter," Todey said.

He added that other crops and rangeland have not been seriously impacted, but will need precipitation soon.

Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension Climate Field Specialist said the dry conditions have allowed soils to warm and allowed for earlier than usual access to fields, giving farmers a head start on spring field work. With the current fire issues, Edwards added that some producers are waiting until the evening to plant corn because of higher relative humidity and lighter winds, two factors which reduce fire risks in the field.

"Soil temperatures (at 4 inches) in the state continue to hover in the upper 40 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit - a level where corn planting is appropriate. The dry conditions and overall warm temperatures have helped push soil temperatures warmer statewide," Edwards said.

Current soil temperature data can be found at: http://climate.sdstate.edu/awdn/maps/soilmaps.asp.

Todey said the longer range outlooks from NOAA for May and the summer are somewhat more optimistic, with May showing equal chances for below or above average over most of the state. "The 90-day outlook and outlooks into the summer even bring above average chances for precipitation in the western part of the state," said Todey.

CURRENT FORECAST

Planting could be slowed by cooler conditions statewide next week. Cooler temperatures could reduce some of the potential fire issues and reduce evaporative demand from the atmosphere, but Todey said there will be little precipitation.

The cold period coming the week of April 20 could slow planting progress. "Next week conditions will cool statewide for the better part of the week, reducing some of the potential fire issues, but also bringing little for precipitation," Todey said.

He added that the reduced evaporative demand from the atmosphere will also help. "Even with the reduced evaporative demand, more widespread rain is needed everywhere in the state to help initiate growth and to remove soil moisture deficits in the shorter term," he said.

Throughout the 2015 growing season, SDSU Extension will provide climate updates. For more information, visit iGrow.org.

Spring Turn-Out Dates: What Are Your Grazing Options?

BROOKINGS — Every year at green up, grass managers must make decisions about when and where to begin grazing.

Considerations include hay reserves, the cost of purchasing additional feed and the impact of early grazing on pasture grasses, explained said Pat Johnson, SDSU Professor of Range Science.

Before a decision can be made, there is often a long list of questions that need to be answered including; How long should they continue to feed stored forages, to delay the impact of grazing on pastures? How early can cattle be turned out to relieve the cost of feeding? Which pastures should be grazed first? "The answer to these questions is — It depends," Johnson said. "Cattle producers may have several options, depending on their pasture resources, their stored feed resources and their ability to be flexible with their grazing options."

PHOTO: METRO GRAPHICS

OPTIONS

Depending on a cattle producer's situation, Johnson provides a list of turnout options to consider.

Continue feeding livestock a few weeks longer: If a producer has the feed reserves available, feeding livestock a little later into spring provides the pasture grasses with time to shift from dependency on reserves to utilizing photosynthesis for energy. If grazing is initiated too early, production for the balance of the growing season can be reduced.

Graze tame grass pastures earliest: Access to pastures planted with introduced cool-season grasses, such as crested wheatgrass and smooth brome, provides early season flexibility and avoids early grazing on native pastures which may compromise production later in the season.

These pastures are typically ready to be grazed two or more weeks before native pastures.

Flash grazing winter pastures: A recent study demonstrated that native winter pastures could be grazed in mid-May at about 25 percent relative use without a decrease in stockpiled winter forage. Exceeding 25 percent use or extending grazing into mid-June, however, could reduce forage in those pastures that you will need next winter.

Wait to graze native pastures until grasses are "ready." Research suggests that grass plants are most vulnerable to grazing before they have formed three new leaves.

Knowing how many growing degree days are required to reach the three-leaf stage provides a general "rule-of-thumb" about plant development.

The date that grasses reach the three-leaf stage varies considerably, so examining the important plants in your own pasture is recommended.

One way to come up with a date to begin examining your grasses is to use "growing degree days" (GDD base 32 degrees Fahrenheit after March 1).

"For introduced grasses, the three-leaf stage generally requires accumulation of about 500 GDD; many native cool-season grasses require about 1200 GDD," Johnson said.

Johnson explained that the calendar date when these growing conditions occur varies considerably from one location to another and from year to year.

For example, climate data from the weather station at Oral indicates the average date at which 1200 GDD accumulate is May 28. For Nisland, average date for 1200 GDD is June 1. Recently, 1200 GDD accumulated as early as May 11 in Oral and May 21 for Nisland.

Growing degree day data for South Dakota weather stations can be accessed using the SDSU Climate website climate.sdstate.edu.

For tame pastures, Johnson said examining crested wheatgrass or smooth bromegrass plants might begin as early as mid-April. Mid-May might be a reasonable date to start examining native cool-season grasses such as western wheatgrass and green needlegrass.

Johnson added a rule-of-thumb to remember when considering the best time to turn-out is never graze the same pasture at the same time of the year, two years in a row.

"While many operations, of necessity, have a calving pasture which is grazed at the same time of the year, every year, most operations can vary where cows and calves begin grazing after calving is completed," Johnson said.

Johnson emphasized that the management goal is to distribute defoliation pressure on desirable species to different times of the season in different years. "If a pasture is grazed at the same time every year, the vigor of plant species which are most vulnerable at that season will be reduced and they may eventually be eliminated from that pasture," she said.

To learn more, visit iGrow.org.