



NE Nebraska RC&D Hosting Field Tour

PLAINVIEW, Neb. — The Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council is hosting a “Bee Friendly” Field Tour on Tuesday, July 30, at Dennis Wacker’s Prairie’s Edge Organic Farm. The site is located 3 miles east of Plainview on U.S. Highway 20 and 1 1/2 mile south of 540 Ave. There is a small fee to attend and pre-registration is requested by Monday, July 29, to 402-582-4866 or northeastrcd@plvwtelco.net/.

Pollinators are in trouble. Parasites, diseases, loss of habitat, and more are threatening their survival, but there’s help if people just know what to do. The Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) website states that 75 percent of the world’s flowering plants and almost 35 percent of the world’s crops need pollinators to reproduce. Many people think just of bees as pollinators, but butterflies, moths, bats, birds and even beetles perform those same functions.

Farmers, gardeners, and backyard conservationists all have a part to play in bringing back the pollinators. Minimizing tillage, maintaining brushy areas, providing a clean water source, having a variety of crops or flowers planted, and reducing the use of pesticides are all important things to do to improve pollinator habitat.

This field tour, starting at 9 a.m. and concluding by 11:30 a.m., will provide a lot more information on the topic. Knowledgeable speakers from NRCS, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, a local beekeeper and the organic farmer will all speak about what they’re doing to help the pollinators. They’ll share tips on how everyone has a role to play and specifically what each person can do to help grow a thriving population of pollinators.

The RC&D Council is a non-profit organization here to serve the needs and interests of the citizens of the area. For more information about RC&D projects or activities, see www.nenercd.org or call 402-582-4866.

Grazing Planning Opportunities Offered

BROOKINGS — Compared with agronomy and cropping sciences, grazing and grassland production generally require less economic input. Because of this, there can be the misconception that grazing management is an enterprise that requires less forethought and management, explained Pete Bauman, SDSU Extension Range Field Specialist.

“This assumption was challenged over the past year as producers managing grazing land were required to respond to a drought that still lingers in the southwest portion of the state,” he said.

He added that those producers who were caught off guard were forced to make adjustments they may not have been prepared for, such as drastic reductions in herd numbers.

“Those that had a sound management plan may also have had to de-stock, but their decisions were based on certain indicators and triggers that were pre-determined by their management plan,” Bauman said.

What producers learned from Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch webinars SDSU Extension encourages producers to incorporate improved planning into grazing systems management. To aid them in their efforts, earlier this year SDSU Extension, in cooperation with the National Drought Mitigation Center, hosted the Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch webinar series to South Dakota producers at our SDSU Extension Regional Centers throughout the state.

During these sessions, producers were exposed to several drought tools and planning resources that are still easily accessible to all. Drought and ranch planning resources are listed below:

- National Drought Mitigation Center: <http://drought.unl.edu/>
- Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch webinar series recordings: <http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/Overview.aspx>
- U.S. Drought Monitoring Tool <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>
- South Dakota NRCS Drought Tool <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/sd/technical/landuse/pasture/>
- Writing a Drought Plan: <http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/WriteaPlan.aspx>

SDSU Extension will continue to serve our grassland producers over the next several months, working with partner organizations to offer additional grazing planning training opportunities; these are listed below:

- South Dakota Rangeland Monitoring School — July 30-31 in New Underwood. This school is designed for any rancher or conservation manager seeking a rapid, repeatable monitoring program. Visit <http://www.sdgrass.org/events.html> for information.
- South Dakota Grazing School — Sept. 10-12 in Chamberlain. This annual class is organized by the South Dakota Grassland Coalition and is a hands-on interactive school. This school is an absolute must for producers wanting to improve their grazing strategies. Visit <http://www.sdgrass.org/events.html> for information.
- Grassfed Rising Conference — Aug. 20-22 in Bismarck, N.D. Combination ranch tours, talks, and advice on managing and marketing grass-fed and grass-finished beef. Visit <http://www.grassfedexchange.com/> for information.
- Prescribed Burn Planning Workshop — September 24 in Pickstown. This half-day workshop is designed for producers interested in learning about fire utilization. Focus will be on eastern red cedar control in rangelands. Visit <http://blogs.missouristate.edu/gpfirescience/2013/05/21/learn-to-plan-for-contingencies/> for information.
- Patch Burn Grazing Workshop — Sept. 25-26, Gary. Combination of ranch tours, talks, and advice on utilizing fire and grazing rotations for grassland health, livestock and wildlife production. Email peter.bauman@sdstate.edu for information. SDSU Extension drought management and pasture insurance planning workshops: Fall 2013, details to be announced.

To learn more visit iGrow.org/.



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

Handle With Care I

Proper Egg-Handling for Backyard Poultry Businesses: Only Gather Eggs From Healthy Chickens and Don’t Crack the Eggs

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the first of a two-part series.

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

With farm-fresh eggs growing in popularity among consumers, many backyard poultry owners can easily sell a few dozen — or more — eggs off their doorstep each week. But nothing ruins an egg business like an outbreak of food-borne illness, so it’s important for producers to take certain precautions when sharing with the public.

“Bacteria can be on both the inside and the outside of the egg,” said Jacquie Jacob, poultry specialist at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Ky. “Even dust can carry Salmonella.”

Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) is the bacteria most often associated with food-borne illness from eggs, she explains, and the source of infection can be many, but preventing infection of the egg is mostly about working with the natural processes already in place.

SICK CHICKENS MEAN QUESTIONS

“For many decades, it was thought that inside the hen’s body, it was sterile,” Jacob said. “In 1980, they discovered that SE can also lodge itself in the reproductive tract of the bird.”

That’s the bad news—that the egg could be contaminated even before the shell is formed. The good news is, preventing SE infection within the hen is as simple as feeding the bird right, Jacob says. The nutritional balance that promotes health in the bird also controls SE infection. This can be achieved with a commercial layer mash, supplemental

calcium through free-choice oyster shell, and access to free range conditions.

“In a good, healthy animal, the good, friendly bacteria keep out the bad, or unfriendly, bacteria,” Jacob said.

SE contamination also happens inside the hen’s body after the shell is formed.

“In the chicken, the waste and the egg are coming out the same hole,” Jacob said, “but it’s not as bad as it seems.”

In a healthy chicken, the egg-laying process prevents the egg from contact with the waste with the way the egg moves through the tract, she explains. But in an unhealthy chicken, this process may not work well and the egg and the waste may move together in the tract. Generally, healthy birds will lay sterile eggs, while the eggs from obviously sick birds — even those whose eggs look normal — should be tossed. However, unlike illnesses that compromise a bird’s bodily systems, a bird infected with SE may be a carrier and not show any symptoms.

“It’s not possible to tell if a hen is infected or not,” Jacob said. “They can appear very healthy, but they shed the bacteria in their waste.”

SE contamination most likely happens when the bacteria invade the egg from outside the shell. The best way to detect SE in a flock is to test the environment. If it’s found, the individual birds should be tested, and infected birds should be removed from the flock.

CRACKED EGGS ARE BAD EGGS

This method of disease prevention is common in commercial flocks, but

this would be costly and time-consuming for most backyard flocks. Jacob says that the number-one prevention guideline for part-time egg businesses is keeping the egg from getting cracked.

This means ensuring a healthy chicken through nutrition and sanitation, as well adhering to floor space recommendations of two square feet per bird indoors and five square feet per bird outdoors, she says. The best bedding to promote a clean, dry environment is chopped straw or wood shavings. There should be a minimum of one nest for every four birds, but if there are fewer than four birds total, there should be two nests. It’s important to control mice and rats, which carry disease. And the roosts should be positioned higher than the nest boxes, so that birds are perching on the roosts rather than in the nests for the night.

“It’s very important to keep the nest boxes clean,” Jacob said.

Eggs should not sit in the nest boxes for long, as they risk getting cracked. Producers should make it a practice to collect eggs at least twice a day, Jacob says. While most of the eggs are laid in the morning, not all chickens have the same body clock. Eggs should be picked up more often during hot weather, which lowers egg quality regardless of bacterial infection.

Any cracked eggs as well as eggs laid outside the nest boxes should be thrown away, Jacob says. Eggs laid on the ground are more likely to have contact with the manure or dirt, which can be a contaminant in itself. It is also more difficult to determine how old the eggs are.

Opinion

Farm Bill May Need Welfare Programs

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent



Rita BRHEL

Do social welfare programs like food stamps, belong in the Farm Bill? A lot of people would probably say no, and certainly many Republicans said so this past week when the House passed their version of the Farm Bill without nutrition assistance programs. But while this move was meant to be strategic in forcing a reform of the food stamps program, separating social welfare programs from agricultural programs — and if this is actually successfully enacted in this manner — could be a very unwise move for pro-ag lawmakers.

I think splitting the social welfare programs from agricultural programs into two separate bills is good for clarification sake, and it may have the intended result of forcing reform of the food stamp program, but I also see it backfiring badly for the agricultural industry.

Social welfare programs affect hugely more of the population than agricultural programs. Even with reform, they will get more funding than agricultural programs will, and over time, that split-off Farm Bill may find itself

dwindling quickly as payment programs for farmers could be viewed infinitesimally less important to the American population as a whole than social welfare programs that can serve anyone who qualifies financially. For example, the WIC program that serves pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five currently serves 53 percent — more than half — of all babies born in the United States.

And WIC is minor compared to SNAP (the current food stamp program).

Looking at the numbers, there is no way around programs that serve half of the U.S. population but, in many people’s eyes, it’ll be a lot easier to cut funding for programs that serve U.S. farmers, which make up just 2 percent of the population. Tying the two together into one bill — agriculture and nutrition assistance — helps us not to forget that 2 percent.

But a lot of people would argue that point. And no one has a crystal ball, so splitting the two could be the very best thing for both agricultural programs and social welfare programs. I’m just giving my two cents. It’d be such a shame for the Farm

Bill’s future death to be the result of Republican’s desire to reform the food stamps program without thinking of the potential long-term impact on agricultural programs.

Farmers are the minority here, a special interest, and while minorities do get heard, democracy just by its very nature is built on majority interest. I can just see splitting the Farm Bill going very badly in the long run for farmers as the new Farm Bill gets labeled a special interest bill and then treated as such.

Just another angle to consider when looking at this issue rather than the ol’ agriculture-versus-food stamps debate ...

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