



River Valley District

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

rivervalley.ksu.edu

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MAY IS OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

Older Americans Month is observed in May and the 2024 theme is, “Powered by Connection.” This theme recognizes the importance of how social connections and significant relationships impact one’s health and well-being.

According to census.gov, as of July 1, 2023, the River Valley Extension District is estimated to have 24.0% of its population at age 65 and older. The following is a breakdown of each counties population that is 65 and older: Clay County- 24.0%, Cloud County- 20.9%, Republic County - 27.4%, and Washington County- 23.8%.

Celebrate the month by promoting the benefits of connecting with others, specifically older adults. Below are some ways you can participate, according to the Administration for Community Living (acl.gov):

- Promote resources that help older adults connect such as social clubs, volunteer opportunities, and community events and programs.
- Communicate facts about how social connection benefits mental, physical, and emotional health and contributes to one’s overall well-being.
- Connect older adults to local resources and services.
- Encourage connection-centered programs that are focused on older adult mentors to youth or peer-to-peer support.
- Encourage local networks to spotlight meaningful social connections and share the benefits.
- Encourage older adults to share what connection means to them, one way to do this is on social media and utilizing the hashtag #PoweredByConnection.

Thank an older Kansan for all they do for you. They are a wealth of wisdom with their life experiences.

SCAM ALERT

The Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General (OIG) is warning about a new scam involving OIG Agents. Reports indicate that scammers are now impersonating Social Security Administration OIG Agents. The scammers are requesting that the victim meet them in-person and hand-off cash. **Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General agents do not operate in this way, they will never pick up money at your door or in any other type of exchange.**

This recent scam introduces the potential for physical danger that other scams have not possessed. Other scams often involved scam phone calls and pressuring individuals to pay cash or use gift cards. Whereas this one involves delivering cash directly to a phony agent. Again, do not exchange your money or funds with anyone stating they are an SSA OIG Agent or any other government agency. They do not conduct business this way. If you believe you have been scammed, then you need to report it. (<https://oig.ssa.gov/assets/uploads/scam-alert-handing-off-money-to-agents.pdf>)

You can find a list of other Social Security Administrative (SSA) scam alerts at the following link <https://oig.ssa.gov/scam-awareness/prior-scam-alerts/>.

WHY IS DRY CANNING NOT SAFE?



You may have heard about “dry canning” shared on social media. Maybe you heard acquaintances talking about it. “Dry canning” is not really “canning.” The practice of sealing flour, nuts, beans, oats or other foods in jars after heating them in some way, such as in an oven, is promoted as a way to extend the shelf life of foods.

Sometimes the lid and ring are placed on the jar before heating, and sometimes, after heating. While the jars may “seal” due to the heat, a true vacuum seal is not created.

Why is dry canning unsafe? All foods contain some amount of water. Moisture pockets could remain in the food in a sealed jar. The moisture level may be great enough to support the growth of spores from bacteria such as *Clostridium botulinum*. By heating nuts or other fat-containing foods, you may be promoting rancidity and its off flavors and smells. You may, in fact, be decreasing the shelf life of foods.

- Best practice: Store dry goods in a sealed container in a cool, dark, and dry place. Refrigerating or freezing flour and other grains and nuts will extend their shelf life. Beans have a long shelf life, but it can be extended with freezing.

More recently, you may have heard about **dry-canning vegetables**, such as raw or cooked potatoes, without any added liquid. This is followed by processing in a pressure canner. Dry canning vegetables is especially risky and could result in the production of the toxin that causes botulism.

Safe canning of vegetables requires liquid to allow for heat transfer throughout the jar during processing, followed by pressure canning according to the current guidance. The vegetables without added liquid, therefore, are not heated evenly during processing and the bacterial spores are not destroyed. Procedures have been developed to ensure that food in jars remains safe. Low-acid foods, such as vegetables, must be pressure canned (or frozen) following research-tested procedures to ensure safety.

- Best practice: Contact your Extension office or website for research-based information about safely canning a wide range of vegetables, fruits, and other foods. This website: www.ncrfsma.org/north-central-foodsafety-extension-network-ncfsen provides links to Extension resources in the 12 states of the North Central region.

Correct pressure is important when canning low-acid foods such as meats and vegetables. As water boils in a canner, it expands to steam and pressurizes the canner. Pressure in the canner affects the temperature at which water boils. At sea level and 0 pounds on a pressure gauge (0 psig), water boils at 212°F. As the canner heats and pressure builds, the boiling point of water increases and the temperature of circulating steam and water also increases.

The high temperature due to pressure allows us to can low-acid foods for a relatively short period. Before the widespread introduction of home pressure canning appliances, canning instructions advised the consumer to process green peas in a boiling water canner at 212°F for 3 hours. Now, the approved recipe recommends consumers process green peas in a pressure canner at 10 or 11 psig (roughly 240°F) for 40 minutes. The high temperature dramatically reduces the time needed to destroy the spores of *Clostridium botulinum* and improves the quality of the final product. Approved safe recipes for pressure canning can be found at the National Center for Home Food Preservation: nchfp.uga.edu and at local Extension programs.

This article is from the Mar/Apr 2024 issue of the Preserve It Fresh, Preserve It Safe Newsletter published by both Kansas State University and the University of Missouri. If you have food preservation questions you can direct them to Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent at 785-243-8185 or kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu.

CUT THE CLUTTER AND GET ORGANIZED



Did you miss the opportunity to attend a Cut the Clutter & Get Organized program? If you are still wanting to learn some tips and tricks to tackling that clutter, you can watch Cut the Clutter & Get Organized online!

Within the link, you will be asked to complete demographics, watch the recording of Cut the Clutter & Get Organized, access the resources right away and/or have them emailed to you, and complete a quick survey.

You can access this recording online at <https://bit.ly/4aSz4uk> (website address is case sensitive) or by scanning the QR code with a smartphone camera.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu.



MEDICARE BASICS

Medicare, its parts, options, and plans can be confusing. If you'll be starting Medicare soon, consider attending Medicare Basics to learn more about eligibility, benefits, the enrollment process, and more!

River Valley Extension District Agent Monica Thayer will be presenting a Medicare Basics Program on:

Thursday, May 9th at 7pm

Belleville Public Library

1327 19th Street, Belleville, KS 66935

Medicare Basics is free to attend, but registration is requested. Please RSVP to the RVD-Belleville Office at 785-527-5084. If you would rather schedule a personal appointment or if you have specific questions regarding Medicare, please call Monica Thayer at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu or Jordan Schuette at 785-325-2121 or jschuette@ksu.edu.

HIGH YIELD SAVINGS ACCOUNT

A high-yield savings account (HYSA) is a type of savings account that pays a higher interest rate than traditional savings accounts. Annual percentage yields (APYs) may be as high as 4-5 compared to traditional savings accounts typically being less than 1% APY. HYSAs have gained popularity in the recent years so are they a good choice for you?

Depending on what you are saving for, HYSAs can be beneficial. Many times, they are free accounts and don't have any balance requirements so HYSAs can be a great option for any funds that you need quick access to, such as emergency funds or savings for short-term goals. Unfortunately, many local financial institutions may not offer HYSAs, but commonly offer Certificates of Deposits (CDs).

CDs typically have higher interest rates like, or even higher than, HYSAs, but require a certain length of deposit, such as 7 months, 12 months, etc. In addition, CDs often have fees involved if you need to withdraw funds before the maturity date. Because they aren't subject to fixed terms, HYSAs offer higher liquidity than CDs. Typically, HYSAs don't have early withdrawal penalties and you can access your funds at any time.

Since HYSAs are not typically linked to any specific terms, the APY can fluctuate as the market changes. On the contrary, if you purchase a CD at 5.1% APY for 12 months, as long as you meet the maturity date, you will receive the 5.1% APY. HYSAs APY can change daily to reflect the current market.

Please note, the interest from HYSAs is taxable so if you

earn more than \$10, your financial institution will send you a 1099-INT. If you want to build wealth for the future, investing may have more potential to give you better returns and tax advantage options than a HYSA in the long run.

If you have any questions regarding High Yield Savings Account or other financial management topics, please contact Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent, at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu.

FAIR JUDGES NEEDED

The River Valley Extension District is in need of county fair judges. With judges retiring each year and multiple county fairs on top of one another it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure judges for our local county fairs.

There is a wide variety of projects we need judges for including sewing, photography, arts & crafts, foods, educational posters, woodworking, STEM projects, horticulture, crops, a multitude of different livestock species, and pets.

If you have never been a judge before that is no problem at all, if you have an interest in one of the aforementioned projects and would like to learn more about being a judge, the local Extension Office has resources available. You are also welcome to swing by the county fair and observe our judges at work to get a better idea of what judging entails. Please reach out to a local Extension Office for more information :

Clay	785-632-5335
Cloud	785-243-8185
Republic	785-527-5084
Washington	785-325-2121

**RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT OFFICES
WILL BE CLOSED
FOR MEMORIAL DAY ON
MONDAY, MAY 27, 2024**



KANSAS TURNPIKE CASHLESS SYSTEM

Did you know the Kansas Turnpike is converting to a cashless system in July 2024? This means customers will no longer stop at booths to pay tolls. Instead, customers will have a few options for paying tolls.

Customers will be identified by their K-TAG or license plate and then billed through DriveKS. DriveKS is Kansas' new toll payment system. All statements and customer communication will come from DriveKS. Customers who use a compatible transponder from another state will continue using their existing account. Currently, Oklahoma, Texas, and Florida transponders are compatible, and the Turnpike Authority is working to add additional states.

For customers who use K-TAG, not much will change. Transactions rather than trips will be listed on statements and statement dates will change to increase efficiency and customer service. When cashless tolling begins, K-TAG accounts will automatically convert to DriveKS accounts. Customers using transponders in their vehicles will save 50% on tolls, compared to license plate customers.

Customers who do not use a transponder will have new ways to pay: create an account prior to travel or wait for a mailed bill and pay using the tolls listed on the statement. Limited online functionality will be available for customers who wish to pay after driving but before they receive a statement.

Using a K-TAG is very convenient. The tag itself is free and it means no stopping at tollbooths, waiting in line, or digging for change. K-TAG also works on toll roads in Oklahoma, Texas, and Florida. Those charges automatically appear on your bill.

To start saving money now, customers are encouraged to get a K-TAG at www.myktag.com. Additional information is available at www.DriveKS.com.

“WALK WITH US OVER YOUR LUNCH HOUR” SCHEDULED IN CLAY CENTER

Join us on Monday, May 13th from 11 am – 2 pm at the Clay Center Zoo walking trails for a “Walk With Us Over Your Lunch Hour” event. This is a free come and go event open to all ages. Join us for exercise, snacks, and prizes. No sign up is required, just show up and join in!



MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR MAY 2024

Cow Herd Management

- If cows are in marginal BCS (4.0 – 5.0) going into breeding, possibly consider:
 - ◊ Supplementing 2-3 weeks prior to and through 1st cycle.
 - ◊ Using monensin (200 mg/hd/day) in feed supplements.
 - ◊ Temporary calf removal or a CIDR to initiate estrus in anestrus females.
 - ◊ Early weaning if BCS doesn't improve during the season.
- Pregnancy check and cull fall calving cows, if not already done.
- With higher costs, it's important to closely manage salt and mineral programs.
 - ◊ Record date and amount of salt and mineral offered and calculate herd consumption.
 - ◊ If consumption is 2X the target intake, then cost will be too!
 - ◊ Properly store bags and pallets to avoid damage and product loss.
- Continue to provide high magnesium mineral formulas to cows grazing high risk forages: wheat, rye, triticale, oats, bromegrass, and other cool-season forages.
- Risk of grass tetany is greatest for lactating cows and older cows.
- Closely monitor bulls at the start of the breeding season for injury and to make sure they are aggressively covering cows.
- Finalize health protocols for spring-born calves and cattle going to summer grass.
- Consider supplementing or feeding replacement heifers for a period when initially turning to grass if they don't have post-weaning grazing experience and/or forage supply is limited.

General Management

- Reconsider stocking rates and turn-out dates for drought stressed pastures.
- Begin implementing early season weed/invasive species control.
- Employ multiple strategies and chemistries for controlling flies and insects.
- With high feeder calf prices this spring, consider price risk management tools.

- Make and evaluate important production calculations:
 - ◊ Calving distribution (% 1st cycle, % 2nd cycle, % 3rd cycle)
 - ◊ Calving interval
 - ◊ % calf crop (# calves weaned/# cows exposed for breeding) for calves born in fall 2023

SELECTING A REPLACEMENT FEMALE FOR THE HERD

Working in agriculture often involves a series of decisions, including which crops should be planted in a rotation, what inputs are most economical, and -- in the case of rebuilding the cow herd -- should replacement females that were born to first-calf heifers be retained?

This was the question that the Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute experts addressed on a recent [Cattle Chat](#) podcast episode. "There are a lot of factors that go into that decision as to whether or not keeping heifers born to heifers is a good idea, and it depends on the goal of the breeding program," said K-State veterinarian Brad White. With proper planning, beef producers can make retaining heifers born to heifers work for a herd. If producers plan to do that, they need to plan and select sires that are adequate for calving ease but also offer maternal traits that are beneficial.

"I like to keep heifers born to first-calf heifers if they are born early in the breeding season and they are born to a mating that was genetically planned to create replacement females," White said. K-State veterinarian Bob Larson agreed, adding, "there are some AI (artificial insemination) sires that have good maternal traits while being adequate for calving ease that can make females worth considering as replacements."

K-State nutritionist Phillip Lancaster sees one other genetic advantage of keeping replacement females born to first-calf heifers. "I am going to boost the genetic progress of the herd overall much quicker by keeping the daughters of the youngest females in the herd," Lancaster said. However, it is important to look at the performance of the cow family that these potential replacement heifers are born from when making this decision. "Take a look at the records and if that heifer is born to a proven cow line in terms of longevity and reproductive performance, that will help you make the decision about keeping the heifer calf that was born from a heifer in the herd," Lancaster said.

Another factor to consider is the frame size of the replacement female being considered, said K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers. The size concern relates to the pelvic size of the calf when she matures and is bred to calve her first calf. "Some daughters born to calving ease sires may be predis-

posed to future calving difficulty due to their smaller frame size,” Larson said. Lubbers also said the timing of when they were born as compared to the rest of the herd is something that should factor into the decision of keeping or selling that heifer calf. “If the heifer calf was born late in the breeding season and she is small framed, then I would recommend producers do not retain them in the herd.”

To hear the full discussion, listen to [Cattle Chat](#) on your preferred streaming platform.

FARM INCOME DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGIES: A PROGRAM SUPPORTING FARMER ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Have you ever considered adding an outside-the-box enterprise to your farm?

The River Valley Extension District is rolling out an all-new project: **Farm Income Diversification Strategies: A Program Supporting Farmer Entrepreneurship**. We’re partnering with local farmers and ranchers to explore and set in motion new enterprises to generate high-margin, value-added revenue streams by leveraging existing resources.

Having several farm enterprises is one of the main ways to manage risk in a volatile agricultural industry. Whether you raise corn or milo, run stockers or cow-calf, each of these enterprises bears its own economic uncertainty. As input costs, interest rates, and commodity prices continue to slip in unfavorable directions, finding solid ground for net farm income requires greater and greater creativity. High-margin, value-added enterprises offer an avenue of increasing financial stability.

What do we mean by “high margin” and “value-added”? Basically, these are farm business ventures that produce something other than a conventional agricultural commodity. They could be direct-to-market products (raw honey, wool, vegetables, etc.), hospitality services (hunting cabins, wedding venues, dude ranches, Airbnb’s, etc.), or even ventures into digital media. It all boils down to what you believe could be a possible fit for your current operation.

This program is meant for farmers & ranchers and their families who are considering opportunities to use their farm resources to diversify their family incomes and improve their financial resilience. If this is you, even if only as a vague daydream in the back of your mind, we want to hear from you! The program’s success is measured by our ability to connect with the unique visions of our participants, and we plan to structure our program around the ideas that participants share with us. Call us, write to us, email us, stop in and talk to us, and help connect us with others!

Once we have accumulated feedback from interested individuals, the program will launch, starting with in-person events in the regions near to participants, and followed up with one-on-one assistance opportunities for participants wanting to get the ball rolling on their new enterprise pursuits. Reach

out to Luke Byers, River Valley Extension District Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, at 785-632-5335, by email at lsbyers@ksu.edu, by mail at 322 Grant Ave., Clay Center, KS 67432, or in person at the Clay Center Extension Office. We look forward to hearing from you!

MULCHING TIPS

Now is the time of year when people are thinking about mulching their landscape beds. Mulching is an important gardening practice that offers many benefits to the soil as well as your plants. The most important benefit of mulch is that it helps to conserve moisture and keep the soil cooler during our long, hot summers. Mulch is also great at stopping unwanted weeds in your landscape. A freshly mulched area is the finishing touch, like frosting on a cake. Mulching is pretty easy but there are a few common mistakes that should be avoided.

When mulching around trees the most common mistake is applying mulch too close to the trunk. Prolonged exposure of the trunk to the moist mulch results in decay of the bark layer, leading to poor growth or death. When properly applied mulch should start a few inches away from the trunk and extend at least three feet out from the base. The depth of the mulch layer should be about three inches and no more than four inches. When mulching trees, keep in mind the mulch pile should look like a doughnut, not a volcano.

When mulching around shrubs follow the same depth guidelines as trees. When piling mulch around the base of the plant, place mulch a few inches away from the base. Shrubs look best in the landscape when large beds or groupings of plants are all mulched together. Remove any grass between the shrubs or other plants and mulch the grouping as a whole.

When mulching around flowers and vegetables a three-inch layer is recommended. A finer textured mulch could be used around flowers. Vegetable gardens are best mulched with materials such as straw, leaves, or grass clippings that will break down by the end of the season and can be incorporated into the soil.

When choosing what kind of mulch to use, that is a personal preference. All mulching materials that are organic, except rocks, provide the same basic function. The difference is in the texture, color, lasting power, and of course, cost. Trees and shrubs look good mulched with just about any material. Flower gardens look best against a darker color and finer grade of mulch. No matter what type of mulch you chose, it is important to follow these tips, not only for a beautiful landscape but for healthy plants as well. If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.

POISON IVY IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL

If you have ever had poison ivy, you likely are not looking forward to getting it again. Learning to identify poison ivy is vital if you wish to avoid the rash that accompanies exposure. Unfortunately, identification of poison ivy can be difficult because it occurs in three forms: an erect woody shrub, a groundcover that creeps along the ground, and a woody vine that will climb trees.

When poison ivy climbs, it forms numerous aerial roots that give the vine the appearance of a fuzzy rope. The leaves of poison ivy also vary. Though the compound leaf always has three leaflets, the leaf margins may be toothed, incised, lobed, or smooth. The size of the leaves also can vary, although usually the middle leaflet is larger than the other two. Also, the middle leaflet is the only one with a long stalk; the other two are closely attached to the petiole (leaf stem). The number of leaves gives rise to the saying: "Leaves of three, let it be!" Poison ivy is often confused with Virginia creeper or Woodbine. Each of these vines, however, has five leaflets rather than three.

There are three methods commonly used to eradicate poison ivy. These include pulling out the plants by hand, cutting off the vine, and then treating the regrowth, and spraying the plants directly. The method used depends somewhat on the plant's growth form. If the plant is growing as a groundcover, direct spray or pulling the plant out is often used. If pulling, wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt. The soil must be moist for pulling to work well. Wash the clothes and yourself immediately after you finish. It might also be a good idea to rinse the washing machine. If the plant is in the shrub form, direct spray is the most common control method. If the plant is a woody vine that has climbed a tree, the preferred method is to cut the plant off at the base and treat the sprouts after



they emerge. Some Triclopyr herbicides also have instructions on treating a freshly cut stump directly. Triclopyr (Bush-B-Gon Poison Ivy Killer, Brush Killer Stump Killer) is most often used for poison ivy control. Other herbicides that can be used included glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall Weed and Grass Killer, Nutgrass, Poison Ivy and VineKiller). Poison ivy is tough to kill. Repeat applications may be necessary. If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.

CONTROLLING YELLOW NUTSEDGE IN LAWNS

Yellow nutsedge is a relatively common problem in lawns, especially in wet years or in lawns with irrigation. Although it looks much like a grass, it is a sedge. Unlike grasses, sedges have triangular stems. The leaves are three-ranked instead of two-ranked, which means the leaves come off the stem in three different directions. Yellow nutsedge is pale green to yellow and grows rapidly in the spring and early summer. Because of this rapid shoot growth, it sticks up above the rest of the lawn only a few days after mowing. This weed is a good indicator of poor drainage, but it can be introduced into well-drained sites through contaminated topsoil or nursery stock. As with many weeds, nutsedge is less competitive in a dense, healthy lawn.

Nutsedge is difficult to control culturally because it produces numerous tubers that give rise to new plants. Pulling nutsedge will increase the number of plants growing in your yard because the dormant tubers are activated. However, it is possible to control nutsedge by pulling, but you must be persistent. If you are, eventually the nutsedge will die out.

If you were going to treat with an herbicide, it would be better to leave the nutsedge plants undisturbed so the herbicide can be maximally translocated to the roots, rhizomes, and tubers. Several herbicides are available for nutsedge control. Sedge Hammer, which used to be called Manage, is the most effective and safe for most turfgrasses. It is also the most expensive, but if an infestation is not too severe, one application should take care of the problem. The Sedge Hammer label says to apply it after the nutsedge has reached the three-to eight-leaf stage. Waiting until this growth stage apparently results in improved translocation of the active ingredient to the underground tubers and rhizomes. However, research has shown that the application should be done by June 21. If the initial spray is after June 21, mature daughter tubers may be stimulated to grow, so not all of the nutsedge would be killed with one spraying. If you have any questions feel free to stop by or contact me in the in the Washington office, 785-325-2121 or khatesohl@ksu.edu.

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**RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT
“2024 UP-COMING MEETINGS & EVENTS”**

DATE	TIME	PROGRAM	LOCATION
May 8, 15, 22, 29 June 5 & 12	6-7pm	MED Instead of Meds (6 week series)	Wakefield Public Library-205 3rd Street
May 9	7pm	Medicare Basics	Belleville Public Library-1327 19th Street
May 13	11-2pm	Walk With Us Over Your Lunch Hour	Clay Center-Zoo Walking Trail
May 14	2pm	Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate?	Clay Center– Office Meeting Room
May 27		Memorial Day	RVED Closed in Observance
June 5		Wheat Plot Tours	District– See flier on insert
July 16-21		Cloud County Fair	
July 16-21		Washington County Fair	
July 23-28		Clay County Fair	
July 29-Aug. 3		Republic County Fair	