

EXTENSION IS ON THE MOVE

Nebraska Extension in Knox County, P.O. Box 45, Center, NE 68724

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Volume 6, Number 1

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2015 IMPACT REPORT EXTENSION

Knox County Report

The Learning Child

94% of participants indicated that as a result of The Learning Child Programming, they now have the skills and knowledge to engage young children in positive, responsive and age appropriate interactions that support children's healthy growth, learning and development.

16 Early Learning Guidelines Programs were presented providing **90 hours** of professional development for **1,500 providers/parents** through local face-to-face programs, on-line programs, Facebook and Pinterest.

Professional child care provider said, "Ruth offers great age appropriate activities that are fun, easy to do and educational."

Reaching 12,000 Clientele in a Variety of Ways

- Kidkeeper & The Learning Child Facebook Pages
- Face-to-Face and Office Contacts
- "Extension On The Move"

"This newsletter has the best variety of research based information. I look forward to each issue" stated a newsletter recipient.

4-H Program

- **991 4-H and School Enrichment Members**
 - This is 60% of the student population in Knox County (source drs.education.ne.gov)
- In 2015 an estimated 2550 hours were given to the 4-H Program by adult and youth volunteers.
 - These hours are worth **\$52,581** to Knox County (based on Independent Sector's estimate of Nebraska's value of a volunteer hour in 2014 as \$20.62).
- **Science, Technology, Engineering & Math Programming**
 - 710 aspiring scientists developed interests, skills, and abilities in the areas of agriculture, energy, environmental stewardship and technology.

Approximately 100 Agricultural Producers Attended:

- Managing Cropping Challenges
- Beef Profit Tips
- Making Money & Managing Risk with Flexible Cash Lease Provisions
- Private Pesticide Applicator Training
- Farm Safety Program

Profitability of \$100,322 from knowledge gained



Visit knox.unl.edu for more information.

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Lincoln

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Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

ON THE RANCH

Farmer's Tax Guide

Nebraska Extension Offices will not be receiving this publication this year as the IRS has dropped the number of publications they are still printing.

You can still access it for free from the IRS website (link below).

<https://www.irs.gov/uac/About-Publication-225>

2016 Beef Profit Workshop 16 Nebraska Sites this Winter

During the winter of 2016 Nebraska Extension will host 16 Beef Profitability Workshops to help beef producers evaluate their operations to make them more profitable through the latest research information.

Examples of some of the topics that will be presented at each location by presenters:

- Harvesting crop residues –does it affect future crop yields
 - Balancing the Ranch for Protein
 - Fencing and Watering Options on Crop Residue
 - Mineral Nutrition
 - Managing Risk on the Average Sized Cow-Calf Operation
 - Composting Livestock Carcasses
 - Evaluating & Valuing Cull Beef Cows & their Carcasses
 - Windrow Grazing
 - Cow Deprecation- (2nd largest cost)
- Forage Testing and What the Numbers Mean
 - Hay and Land Grazing Rates
 - EPDs and Bull Selection
 - Global Market Landscape
 - Economics in the Beef Industry and Beef Outlook
 - Livestock Outlook

A team of UNL Extension Educators, including Steve Pritchard, Larry Howard, Dennis Bauer, Gary Stauffer, Jim Jansen, Steve Tonn, and Steve Niemeyer will present information as well as practical approaches for the beef producer.



Knox County will host one of these workshops in Center on Thursday, February 11th beginning at 1:00 p.m. Call 402-288-5611 to register.

These workshops have been held across Nebraska for the past Twelve Years. Workshops are sponsored by Nebraska Extension. The cost is \$15.00 but may vary from location depending on local sponsorship. **Pre-Registration is required by calling the local Extension office in the host county at least three days before the workshop to ensure there are enough handouts and refreshments.**

For more information or assistance, please call Steve Niemeyer, UNL Extension Educator in Garfield, Loup and Wheeler Counties at 308-346-4200 in Burwell or sniemeyer1@unl.edu.

2016 Beef Profit Tips Series

Date	City	Location	Time	Contact
January 28	Springview	Senior Citizen Center	12:00 p.m. With Meal	Dennis Bauer 402-387-2213
January 28	Bassett	Methodist Church	7:00 p.m. No Meal	Dennis Bauer 402-387-2213
February 11	Center	Courthouse Annex Meeting Room	1:00 p.m. No Meal	Ruth Vonderohe 402-288-5611
February 11	O'Neill	Holt County Courthouse Annex	7:00 p.m. No Meal	Gary Stauffer 402-336-2760
February 22	Oakland	Oakland Community Room	1:00 p.m. No Meal	Larry Howard 402-372-6006
February 22	Wayne	Fire Hall	7:00 p.m. No Meal	Keith Jarvi 402-584-2234
February 23	Albion	Veterans Club	1:00 p.m. No Meal	Steve Pritchard 402-395-2158
March 1	Osceola	Polk County Fairgrounds	1:00 p.m. No Meal	Michael Rethwisch 402-367-7410
March 2	Humboldt	Richardson County Fairgrounds	1:00 p.m. No Meal	Kaytlyn Kennedy 402-245-4324
March 2	Beatrice	Gage County Extension Office	7:00 p.m. No Meal	Paul Hay 402-223-1384
March 3	Weeping Water	Cass County Extension Office on Fairgrounds	1:00 p.m. No Meal	Ashley Benes 402-267-2205
March 3	Ithaca	Saunders County Extension Office (ARDC)	7:00 p.m. No Meal	Karna Dam 402-624-8030
March 4	Hartington	Cedar County Extension Office	12:00 p.m. With Meal	Jim Jansen 402-254-6821
March 10	Bartlett	Bibs & Boots	10:00 a.m. No Meal	Steve Niemeyer 308-346-4200
March 28	Leigh	Colfax County Fairgrounds	1:00 p.m. No Meal	Aaron Nygren 402-352-3821
April 12	David City	David City Library	9:30 a.m. No Meal	Michael Rethwisch 402-367-7410

Top 10 Nutrition Tips for Your Horse

1. Always supply unlimited quantities of clean, fresh water.
2. Maximize forage intake.
3. Minimize concentrate consumption.
4. The Calcium to Phosphorous ratio (Ca:P) should be between 3:1 to 1:1.
5. Supplement minerals and vitamins.
6. Balance a horse's ration in the following order: energy, protein, minerals, and vitamins.
7. Monitor your horse's body weight and body condition score.
8. Maintain your horse's teeth in good chewing condition.
9. Change feedstuffs gradually.
10. Feed each horse as an individual.



Managing Market Risk: Protecting Profits in a Volatile Cattle Market

Nebraska Extension in collaboration with the North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center and USDA/NIFA is presenting a follow-up workshop on information and tools designed to help manage market risk, and develop a marketing plan to achieve your market risk management goals.



Thursday, February 18, 2016
12:00 - 4:00 pm
Bloomfield Community Center

101 S Broadway, Bloomfield, Nebraska

Free to Attend
Registration Required for Lunch Count

Registration Required
Contact Nebraska Extension
by 4:30 pm on February 16
at 402-254-6821

Workshop Topics

- ◆ Determine Your Cost of Production
- ◆ Understanding Your Market Environment
- ◆ Reviewing Available Marketing Tools
 - Futures & Options versus Contracts & Sales (Basis Risk)
 - LRP Insurance Review & Outlook

The event speakers are Dr. Jay Parsons, Dr. Kate Brooks, and Jim Jansen, Agricultural Economists with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



**NORTH CENTRAL
EXTENSION
RISK MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**

This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA
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Additional Workshops:

February 19 – O'Neill
Holt County Extension Office
126 N 6th St
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Contact: Gary Stauffer 402-336-2760

February 24 – Columbus
Farm Credit Service of America Conference Room
4865 Old Monastery Rd.
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Contact: Allan Vhynaulic 402-563-4901

Goats Beneficial to Vegetation Management

Several characteristics of goats make them the animal of choice for vegetation management. Goats are a low-input animal, require a minimum investment for start-up, have low expenditures for maintenance and require only a moderate level of labor for animal management. However, goats do require a high level of management knowledge. Goats have a diverse dietary preference and consume a wide variety of plants. They have very nimble lips, allowing for selection and consumption of the most nutritious components of the available biomass. Goats have a preference for browse and can consume significant amounts of forbs. They can stand on their hind legs reaching over 6 feet into browse plants. Goats tolerate higher levels of tannins



than cattle or sheep and rarely bloat. In addition, they have few problems from plant toxicity as the large number of plant species consumed daily generally prevents consumption of a toxic dose of any particular one. The diet diversity of goats probably minimizes their likelihood of mineral deficiencies.

A final benefit of using goats to control vegetation is that, while these animals consume undesirable plants, they are also producing a saleable product. Instead of spending between \$10 and \$25 per acre for chemical control, goats may provide a return of \$10 to \$20 per acre while controlling vegetation.

Source: <http://articles.extension.org/pages/19514/goat-vegetation-goats-beneficial>

IN THE FIELD

Now available:
2016 Spring Seed
 Guide with
 information on UNL
 corn and soybean
 trials.
 Visit
[http://cropwatch.unl.edu/
 mage/CW_News/2015/UN
 L-2016-Spring-Seed-
 Guide.pdf](http://cropwatch.unl.edu/image/CW_News/2015/UNL-2016-Spring-Seed-Guide.pdf) or contact
 your local
 Nebraska
 Extension Office.

2016 Private Pesticide Applicator Dates

Cost: \$30 at training plus \$25 billed from NE Dept. of Ag

Licensed private pesticide applicators can buy and use restricted-use pesticides in their farming operations after completing this training.

Private applicators needing recertification in 2016 should have received a letter notifying them from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and their local Nebraska Extension Office. The Department of Ag letter includes a bar code, which eliminates the need to complete the standard NDA application form for those wanting to recertify.

Trainings Held in Knox County

February 01	9:00 a.m.	Verdigre	United Methodist Church
February 08	1:00 p.m.	Creighton	Walter Larsen Senior Center
February 15	6:00 p.m.	Bloomfield	Community Center

Other Area Trainings:

January 27	1:00 p.m.	Hartington	VFW Hall
January 27	6:00 p.m.	Hartington	VFW Hall
January 28	1:00 p.m.	Fordyce	Fire Hall
January 28	1:30 p.m.	Neligh	American Legion Hall
January 28	6:00 p.m.	Fordyce	Fire Hall
January 28	6:30 p.m.	Neligh	Courthouse Basement Meeting Rm
February 3	1:00 p.m.	Laurel	Community Learning Center
February 9	1:00 p.m.	Norfolk	Lifelong Learning Center
February 18	1:00 p.m.	Pierce	Pierce County Extension Office
February 18	6:00 p.m.	Pierce	Pierce County Extension Office
March 1	9:00 a.m.	Norfolk	Lifelong Learning Center
March 1	1:30 p.m.	O'Neill	Holt County Courthouse Annex
March 3	1:30 p.m.	Butte	Boyd County Courthouse
March 8	1:00 p.m.	Plainview	City Building
March 10	1:30 p.m.	Neligh	American Legion Hall
March 29	9:30 a.m.	O'Neill	Holt County Courthouse Annex
March 29	1:00 p.m.	Norfolk	Lifelong Learning Center
April 5	1:30 p.m.	Spencer	Our Saviors' Lutheran Church
April 12	1:00 p.m.	Norfolk	Lifelong Learning Center
April 12	2:00 p.m.	O'Neill	Holt County Courthouse Annex

For a complete list of training sessions in the state go online to <http://pested.unl.edu/classes>, where applicators will find pesticide education sites for private applicators listed by county.

There is also the option of becoming certified or recertified through completion of a self-study course, either hard copy or online. The hard copy self-study manual is available at local extension offices, and the online course can be purchased at <http://marketplace.unl.edu> by going to the pesticide education section. The cost for both self-study courses is \$60.

Resistance Problems Not Limited to Weeds and Insects

It is easy to see when weeds or insects develop resistance to a herbicide or insecticide. The weeds or insects are easy to spot in the field. Even some plant diseases are becoming resistant to some fungicides, as evidenced by the infected plants in the field.

A harder place to detect resistance may be when soybean cyst nematodes, SCN, start to overcome the benefits of using a soybean variety with a particular source of resistance to SCN.

Of the hundreds of SCN-resistant soybeans available to producers, the vast majority use the same source of resistance, PI88788. The explanation for this is simple: This is the easiest source of resistance to breed in and still maintain high yielding varieties. (This is done with traditional plant breeding techniques, not GMOs.) And for many years in many fields, those varieties did just what they were supposed to do. They limited SCN reproduction and allowed soybean growers to lower high SCN egg counts or to keep low counts low while maintaining yields.

Managing SCN is all about numbers. If you have SCN in your field, you will never be able to eliminate it, at least not with today's management options. Rather, the goal is to reduce that number as much as possible. SCN populations are measured by egg density, the number of eggs in 100 cc's of soil. For a reference point, that's about enough soil to fill a pop can one-third full.

A certain portion of any SCN population in a field will reproduce on any source of resistance. There is no source of resistance that eliminates all nematodes from reproducing.

When the same source of resistance is used whenever soybeans are planted in a field, the same selection pressure is placed on those nematodes remaining in the soil. And just like when the same herbicide or same insecticide is used over and over, the nematodes that can survive on the PI88788 source of resistance multiply in the soil and the population numbers can increase!

There is a test to determine whether the nematodes in your field are resistant, however, the test is slow, expensive, may not tell the whole story, and generally is not recommended. The easier way to monitor the effectiveness of your SCN-resistant soybeans is to test for SCN about every six years. If your first test was in the fall following a soybean crop, test five or six years later in the fall after soybeans.

If the numbers are holding steady or declining, your management plan is working. If the SCN numbers increase between tests, you may need to consider a longer rotation with non-host plants (alfalfa may be a good choice if it fits in your rotation) or you may need to look for a soybean variety with another source of

resistance. However, these varieties make up less than 3% of all SCN-resistant varieties available.

Many soybean growers have asked about the

effectiveness of seed treatments to reduce SCN numbers in the soil. To date, these products have shown varying results in their effectiveness against SCN. However, new products continue to come on the market and the University of Nebraska and other universities will continue to test their efficacy. One thing should be noted about seed treatments: No seed treatment is intended to take the place of genetic resistance in combating SCN. They should only be used on resistant varieties for SCN-infested fields.

To see how SCN resistant varieties performed in their ability to yield and effectively reduce SCN reproduction, see the Disease Management section under CW Soybeans to get results from the past couple years of trials at

<http://cropwatch.unl.edu/plantdisease/soybean>.

You also may want to review the results of similar trials conducted by Iowa State University visit <http://www.plantpath.iastate.edu/tylkalab/iowa-state-university-scn-resistant-soybean-variety-trials>.

For more information on managing SCN, contact your local Nebraska Extension office.

Source: John Wilson, Extension Educator, and Loren Gielser, Extension Plant Pathologist



HEALTHY EATING

*"Walking is the
best possible
exercise."*

Thomas Jefferson

National Slow Cooking Month

Americans' busy lifestyles often show up in their cooking and eating habits. Over 30 percent of calories are consumed away from home, with more than 40 percent of food dollars spent on food away from home, which is typically higher in calories and fat and lower in calcium, fiber, and iron. Planning meals ahead can improve health while saving time and money. When families eat together, meals are likely to be more nutritious. Family meals also provide a great time for children and parents to reconnect. January is National Slow Cooking Month and one way to increase meals at home is to use a slow cooker. Check out the following information on slow cooker benefits, food safety, and recipe ideas.

Benefits, food safety, and recipe ideas:

Slow cooker benefits. They use less electricity than an oven and can be used year-round. Because of the long, low-temperature cooking, slow cookers help tenderize less-expensive cuts of meat. They usually allow for one-step preparation; putting all the ingredients in the slow cooker saves time and reduces cleanup. A variety of foods can be cooked in a slow cooker, including soups, stews, side dishes, main dishes, meats, poultry, and desserts.

Know your slow cooker. Most slow cookers have two or three settings. Food typically cooks in six to 10 hours on the low setting and four to six hours on the high setting. If possible, turn the slow cooker on the high setting for the first hour of cooking time and then use the setting that fits your needs. Read your slow cooker instruction manual and follow manufacturers' directions. Slow cookers are available in different sizes, so instructions will vary.



Slow cookers and food safety. Begin with a clean cooker, utensils and work area. Keep perishable foods refrigerated until preparation time. Store cut-up meat and vegetables separately in the fridge. Always thaw meat or poultry before putting it into a slow cooker. Vegetables cook slower than meat and poultry, so if using them, put vegetables in first. Then add meat and liquid suggested in the recipe, such as broth, water or sauce. Keep the lid in place, removing only to stir the food or check for doneness.

Safely handle leftovers. Do not store leftovers in a deep container, such as the slow cooker. Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking is completed.

Reheating leftovers in a slow cooker is not recommended. Cooked food should be reheated on the stove, in a microwave, or in a conventional oven until it reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit (F). Then the hot food can be placed in a preheated slow cooker to keep it hot for serving, at least 140 degrees F as measured with a food thermometer.

Recipe conversions. Most recipes can be converted. Because liquids do not boil away in a slow cooker, you can usually reduce liquids by one-third to one-half. This reduction in liquid does not apply to soups. Pasta may become mushy if added too early, so it could be added at the end of the cooking process or cooked separately and added just before serving. Milk, cheese and cream may be added one hour before serving.

Recipe Ideas for Slow Cookers!

Cheesy Spinach-Artichoke Dip

(21 servings)

Ingredients:

- 1 (14 oz.) can artichoke hearts, chopped & drained
- 1 (10 oz.) pkg. frozen spinach, thawed
- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, low-fat, softened
- 1 (8 oz.) carton sour cream, low-fat
- ¾ c. grated Parmesan cheese
- ¾ c. low-fat milk
- ½ c. onion, chopped
- ½ c. mayonnaise low-fat
- 1 T. white vinegar
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ½ tsp. garlic powder (optional)

Directions:

Place ingredients in a 3½ quart slow cooker. Mix well. Cover slow cooker with lid, and cook on low for 1 hour. Stir occasionally. Serve warm with bread or tortilla chips.

•Source: <http://go.unl.edu/aaqv>

Chicken Curry

(Makes 10 servings)

Ingredients:

- 2¾ lb. chicken breasts, without skin
- 1 (16-oz.) jar salsa (mild or medium)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. curry powder
- 1 c. fat-free sour cream.

Directions:

Place chicken in slow cooker. Combine salsa, onions and curry powder and pour over chicken. Cover with lid. Cook on low for 8 to 10 hours (or high for 5 hours). Remove chicken to serving platter; cover and keep warm. Add sour cream to salsa mixture in the slow cooker. Blend and pour over the chicken.

•Source: <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn1511.pdf>

For more resources and tips on slow cooker meals, check out <http://go.unl.edu/dm9k>. For more food, nutrition and health information from Nebraska Extension go to www.food.unl.edu.

Written By: Lisa Franzen-Castle, RD, PhD, Nutrition Specialist, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Prevent Portion Distortion

Portion sizes have gotten bigger over the past 20 years, and so have we! Larger portions add up. Just 100 extra calories per day can lead to a weight gain of 10 pounds per year. Maintaining a healthy weight is a balancing act, balance calories in with calories out.

If you downsize your portion size and feel a smaller portion looks too small, serve it on a smaller plate so it looks larger. Using a smaller plate or bowl can help you eat less according to research by professors Brian Wansink and Koert van Ittersum.



TODAY'S FUTURE

National Folic Acid
Awareness Week
(second week of January)

Eating folic acid can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spine. Women of childbearing age should take a multivitamin with folic acid every day. To learn more about this awareness week, check out [National Council on Folic Acid's website](http://www.folicacidinfo.org).
<http://www.folicacidinfo.org>



Physical Activity is Important for Children & Adults of All Ages

Being active as a family can benefit everyone. Adults need 2½ hours a week of physical activity, and children need 60 minutes a day. Here are a few tips to add activity to your family's busy schedule.

- **Set specific activity times:** Determine time slots throughout the week when the whole family is available. Try doing something active after dinner or begin the weekend with a Saturday morning walk.
- **Turn off the TV:** Set a rule that no one can spend longer than 2 hours per day playing video games, watching TV, and using the computer.
- **Plan for all weather conditions:** Choose some activities that do not depend on the weather conditions. Try mall walking, indoor swimming, or active video games.

Source: [Be An Active Family](#) from USDA's [ChooseMyPlate](#).

No More Whining!

Whining – it's got to be the most aggravating thing a child can do. It definitely gets the attention of adults – parents and caregivers alike. And that's why children whine – to get an adult's attention!

Toddlers and preschoolers haven't yet learned words or vocabulary to express their feelings, needs, and wants. But they can vocalize. When a child gets frustrated because they are not being understood by the parent or caregiver, they often resort to whining. Most often, this age of child doesn't know they are whining...it is not a conscious strategy. What they do know is that this behavior usually results in attention from the adult, thus making it a learned behavior that parents and caregivers have actually (although unintentionally) help to reinforce.

So, how do you stop whining? First, keep in mind that when a toddler or a preschooler begins to whine, it usually indicates that the adult has not focused attention on the child when they are behaving appropriately. To avoid whining, parents and caregivers want to be responsive to the child's first bid for attention. As children then, begin to whine, the most important part of a

response from a parent is patience. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that the child is not trying to be irritating, but is asking for attention. Then, a helpful response might be to respond with "I" statements and the way you would like your child to speak. For instance, "I don't like it when you whine. If you want your teddy bear, please ask like this"...then model the words and tone of voice you would like the child to use. Or you can make a game of it....say, "Whining sounds like this..." and model how your child sounded. Then you can say, "Saying it like this sounds better, don't you think so?" Not only have you taught your child another way to ask for things, but you have provided focused attention and maybe laugh together. Please be very careful, though, not to ridicule your child for their behavior. In the long run, parents and caregivers need to reflect upon the underlying reasons for the whining. Has there been changes in routines, schedules, or other aspects of your life needing your attention? Children who whine are often sending the message that it is time to re-connect to you.

Author: Leslie Crandall, Extension Educator

House Dust Mites

House dust mites are found in nearly every home. These tiny mites can't be seen with the naked eye. They don't bite, burrow or live in our skin and hair follicles.

So What's the Big Deal? People can be allergic to the tiny feces and body fragments of dust mites which are part of what makes up the dust found in our homes. These tiny particles can easily become airborne and inhaled. Symptoms associated with dust mite allergies includes sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, nasal stuffiness, runny nose, stuffy ears, respiratory problems, eczema and in severe cases, asthma. Keep in mind, dust in our homes also contains other allergens. If you want to know if you are allergic to dust mites, a medical doctor trained to treat allergies should be consulted.

Life Cycle - The entire life cycle of a dust mite from egg to adult takes about 3–4 weeks. The mites feed on the human skin scales shed from our bodies, pollen, fungi, bacteria and animal dander. Dust mites don't need to drink water to survive. Their bodies absorb water from the air and in the environment.

Dust mites need warm temperatures (75–80°F) and high humidity (70–80 percent) to thrive. One study reported when humidity levels are 60 percent or lower, the mite population stops growing and dies out.

We make food for dust mites because our bodies continually shed skin. We lose about 1/5 ounce of dead skin each week. We also spend about one-third of our lives sleeping so it makes sense dust mites are found in bedrooms, especially in bedding and mattresses. Dust mites also eat animal dander so you'll also find them where our pets are sleeping.

What You Can Do to Manage Dust Mites

Lower humidity: Reduce humidity levels in your home to less than 50 percent, especially in the bedroom. This is easier to do in the winter time. A study showed using an electric blanket for eight hours a day reduced mites by 50 percent in one month.

Avoid sleeping near furry or feathered pets: Just like humans, pet dander is a food source for mites. If you have pets and suffer from allergies, have your pets sleep as far away from your sleeping area as possible. Make sure pet sleeping areas can be cleaned easily. Hardwood or vinyl floors with washable area rugs are recommended.

Reduce air infiltration: Pollen is another allergen and can be food for dust mites. Keep windows closed and in good repair to reduce air flow into the home.

Cleaning: Wash your bedding weekly in warm water (77°F). If you can't launder your blankets, dry clean them once a year. For non-washable carpets, shampoo, steam clean once a year.

Choose furniture carefully: Avoid furniture that can collect dust. Avoid wool fabrics and rugs because wool sheds. Use washable curtains and rugs. If you have dust mite allergies, avoid wall-to-wall carpeting. If you can't replace carpet, steam clean your carpet each spring at a minimum. Enclose mattresses and pillows in mattress encasements.

Vacuum:

This is the most important tool to manage house dust and dust mites. It is better to vacuum thoroughly once a week rather than lightly each day. Vacuum mattresses and padded furniture thoroughly — at least 20 minutes each.

Dusting: Dust your furniture before vacuuming. Spray furniture polish/dust liquid directly on surfaces reduces airborne particles by 93 percent compared with dry dusting.

Chemicals: Consider only non-chemical controls especially around people with serious allergies. Cleaning and non-toxic approaches should give you protection from dust mites unless you live in very humid, tropical regions of the world.

Registration is now open for the **2016 Nebraska Agri/Eco-Tourism Workshop**, presented by the Nebraska Tourism Commission. The workshop will be held in **Grand Island, February 22-24, 2016**. Join us to learn creative ways to “*Share Your Story*” and get the right tools to grow your business.

To get more information and a full schedule go to <http://visitnebraska.com/media/industry>.

Do You Have a Financial Emergency Kit?

The best lessons are often those learned the hard way. Natural disasters such as hurricanes Katrina and Rita, tornados, ice storms, flooding, and wild fires often require that families evacuate in a hurry, leaving with no more than the clothes on their back. Those same sudden disasters may create dysfunction of entire communities, counties or regions for extended periods of time. During the disaster period, consumers may not have access to communications or financial assets.

Everyone needs to prepare a financial “emergency kit” that is ready “to go” in the event of a disaster. Preplanning for such an emergency can save time, frustration, and money during disaster recovery. Having enough cash on hand to provide for basic needs outside your community is important.

In addition to creating a family “emergency plan” where a pre-determined contact person or location is identified, make a plan for the financial records and other important information you may need to apply for disaster assistance. Gather and store these items in a portable, fireproof, waterproof box/bag that is complete and ready to go should a hurried escape be necessary.

Items for your Evacuation Financial Emergency Kit:

- Cash or traveler’s checks for several days/weeks living expenses
- Rolls of quarters
- Emergency phone numbers for:
 - ▶ family/friends
 - ▶ doctors
 - ▶ pharmacies
 - ▶ insurance companies [both local agent and company headquarters]
 - ▶ credit card companies [write down credit card numbers]
 - ▶ repair contractors
 - ▶ workplace
 - ▶ veterinarian [pet owners]
 - ▶ schools
 - ▶ financial institutions
 - ▶ clergy
- Make copies of:
 - ▶ Insurance policies/information [vehicle and homeowners]
 - ▶ Prescriptions for medications and eyeglasses
 - ▶ Health, dental and prescription insurance cards
 - ▶ Children’s immunization records
 - ▶ Bank account information
 - ▶ Account numbers
 - ▶ Photo copy front and back of all credit cards
 - ▶ Birth certificates and passports
 - ▶ Copies of last two years of income tax statements
 - ▶ Military service records
 - ▶ Driver’s licenses for everyone in the household
- Back-up disc of computerized financial and other important records
- List of computer user names and passwords

While it is important to keep copies of certain financial records, tax and other important documents in a safe deposit box, keep in mind you may not have access to banking services following the disaster to retrieve your information. Natural disasters can strike suddenly. Wise consumers prepare for an emergency by assembling a portable file they can grab during a quick getaway.

Written by Mary Ann Holland, Extension Educator

SPLASH INTO EXTENSION

Water is Nebraska's most important natural resource. University of Nebraska-Lincoln research, extension, and teaching experts from many water-related disciplines are developing this water web site to help you learn about – and develop a greater appreciation of – water. Check it out at water.unl.edu

Question: Our Well Water Tested High for TDS. Is this a Health Concern?

The following answer was provided by Nebraska Extension Educator Sharon Skipton and Nebraska Extension Specialist Bruce Dvorak.

TDS stands for total dissolved solids. It is a measure of the total concentration of dissolved substances in water. A high concentration of total dissolved solids does not necessarily indicate a health hazard.

To evaluate potential health risks associated with high TDS, you must evaluate the concentration of each dissolved solid. For example, the dissolved solids might include calcium and magnesium (hard water) which could be beneficial, contributing to the total calcium and magnesium needed in the human diet. On the other hand, the dissolved solids might include nitrate, which could present a health risk if present in high enough concentrations.

High TDS can affect the taste of the water. High amounts of chlorides result in a salty or brackish taste and can increase the corrosivity of the water (which could include increased lead or copper concentrations). High bicarbonate concentrations (often measured as alkalinity) may result in a bitter taste and may increase the amount of mineral scale formed in pipes and plumbing fixtures.

Therefore, it is important to search beyond the TDS concentration to understand which specific substances are present and at what concentrations. Check your water test results for specific substances that could be contributing to the TDS concentration. If you are unsure which substances listed on your water test report might be included in the TDS concentration, you can call the laboratory that tested the water and ask for clarification. Also, ask if they would recommend additional tests for substances not analyzed in your original water test.



Did You Know

The brain is made up of roughly 75% water.

IN THE DIRT

Are You Interested in Becoming a Master Gardener?

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension will host trainings. For more information contact the Nebraska Extension Office in Wayne County at 402-375-3310 or visit the Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Website at <http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/madison/northeast-nebraska-master-gardener-home/>

Managing Ice & Snow Around Your Home!

With winter in full swing, it is a common practice to use deicers on our sidewalks and driveways to prevent falling on ice. With deicing agents, we need to be careful to not harm our plants when we use them and make good choices on what we use.

Choose Deicers Wisely - Deicers can cause damage to our concrete sidewalks and to our plants growing beside them. Many deicing agents contain salt substances, such as sodium chloride and potassium chloride. Because of the salt content found in these products, it can cause severe damage to our plants if too much is piled on them too often. Typical plant symptoms of salt damage are desiccation (drying out), include stunting, dieback, and leaf margin and tip damage that looks as though the leaves were burned by a chemical.

To avoid damage to the concrete, remove the salt as soon as you can. Deicers are meant to make shoveling easier, not to completely melt away the snow and ice. As soon as the salt melts through the ice and snow enough that it can be removed, go out and shovel it off of the concrete. When removing the snow, do it in a manner that protects the landscape plants growing in the yard. Do not pile the snow onto trees, shrubs, or flower gardens. If it has to be piled onto your landscape, move the salt onto the grass and try to do it in a manner that makes it

more uniform on the grass surface. If too much salt continually gets piled up on the grass in one location, the turf can be harmed.

Sand is a Good Alternative - If you are very concerned with the effect the deicers have on your plants, you can use alternate products for melting the ice. Calcium magnesium acetate is a deicer that contains no salt. This is a safe alternative to the regular salts because it does not harm plants or animals and can be used on concrete because it doesn't cause the damage that salt does. It is also less damaging to the environment than some of the other choices, but runoff of this product can degrade water quality in the surface water. You can also choose to use sand on your concrete, which will cause no damage to the plants in your landscape. Sand will not melt ice, but it will give you traction to walk on the sidewalk. Sand and gravel will not cause any harm to your plants and minimal damage to the environment but it will have to be swept away after the snow and ice melts.

Prevent Physical Damage from Snow and Ice to Landscape Plants -

Another related topic is that of the snow and ice resting on your tree branches and on top of your shrubs. A light accumulation of ice or snow will cause no long term damage to plants, so it's best to allow it to melt off naturally.

Very heavy snow or ice loads, however, can damage plants. Tree branches may break or develop internal cracks, which cannot be seen from the outside, but result in the branches never fully recovering to their normal position. Shrubs may be deformed by the weight of snow or ice pulling the branches. In the case of heavy snow loads, you can use a broom to very gently remove it. But remember that branches are more brittle under very cold conditions; don't do more damage as you try to remove the snow.

Removing heavy ice accumulation is very difficult and highly likely to cause further plant damage. Even though it's hard, allow the ice to melt off naturally.



Choose deicing products carefully to avoid damage to landscape plants, soil and concrete.

GARDEN GUIDE

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

- ▶ Add garden record keeping to the list of New Year's resolutions. Make a note of which flower and vegetable varieties do best and which do poorly in your garden.
- ▶ Use sand instead of salt for icy spots on the sidewalk.
- ▶ Feed the birds regularly and see that they have water. Birds like suet, fruit, nuts and bread crumbs as well as bird seed.
- ▶ Check young trees and shrubs for rodent or rabbit damage.
- ▶ Prevent injury with fencing or protective collars.
- ▶ Avoid heavy traffic on the frozen, dormant lawn. The crown of the plant may be severely damaged or killed.
- ▶ Brush snow from evergreens as soon as possible after a storm. Use a broom in an upward, sweeping motion. Serious damage may be caused by heavy snow or ice accumulating on the branches.
- ▶ Do not wait until late in the winter to order seeds. Many varieties sell out early.
- ▶ Review your vegetable garden plans. Perhaps a smaller garden with fewer weeds and insects will give you more produce.
- ▶ When reviewing your garden catalogs for new vegetable varieties to try, an important consideration is improved insect and/or disease resistance. Watch also for drought-tolerant types.
- ▶ Analyze last year's planting, fertilizing and spraying records. Make notes to reorder successful varieties as well as those you wish to try again.
- ▶ Check stored fruits and vegetables such as potatoes and apples for bad spots which may lead to decay. Remove and use those which show signs of spoiling. Separate others into slotted trays or bins to increase air circulation and reduce decay possibilities.
- ▶ To prolong bloom, protect poinsettias from drafts and keep them moderately moist.
- ▶ Turn and prune house plants regularly to keep them shapely.
- ▶ Pinch back new growth to promote bushy plants.
- ▶ Check all house plants closely for insect infestations. Quarantine gift plants until you determine that they are not harboring any pests.



Fruit Flies

Despite their diminutive size vinegar flies, more commonly known as fruit flies, can be a giant frustration in our lives. Fruit flies are commonly found in homes, restaurants, grocery stores, and even offices. As their name implies, these tiny insects are especially attracted to fruits but also like old vegetables, beer, sodas, and other fermenting items.



We end up with fruit flies by bringing in produce from the garden or store that has eggs laid on it. Adults may also fly through windows or doors and become your new roommate. Fruit flies are differentiated from other flies thanks to their small size (about 1/8th of an inch), their brown color, and their red eyes.

Fruit Fly Control:

Figure 2: Fruit fly trap with apple cider vinegar. Notice all of the dead fruit flies!

Photo from
<http://rurification.blogspot.com/2011/10/fruit-fly-trap.html>



If you want to get a handle on a fruit fly infestation, you need to focus on minimizing breeding grounds. Females can detect over ripened fruit or other fermenting items with their antennae and they will fly in from great distances to lay their eggs there. Your first step will be to find any over-ripened fruit or vegetables and bag them up in a plastic bag. Throw these items out into the trash bin in the garage or outside. A sealable trash can with a lid that fits tightly and stays closed when not in use will help to minimize fruit fly occurrences. With these steps you have prevented new flies from being attracted to your home.

However, some adults are probably still there flying around. To eliminate these stragglers you can construct a simple and cheap trap to catch them. Take an empty container (a baby food jar, a yogurt cup, a pop bottle, etc.) and remove the lid. Fill the container up about 1/4th of the way with apple cider vinegar. This particular kind of vinegar smells just like home to the fruit flies. You will want to add a drop of dish soap to break the surface tension of the vinegar. This is so the flies sink when they land on it. Cover the top of the container with a layer of plastic wrap and poke holes with a toothpick or fork. Now they enter but they never leave!

Once you take these measures the fly population will begin to diminish but complete elimination can take up to 2 weeks.

Written by: *Dr. Jonathan L. Larson, Nebraska Extension*

Wait to prune fruit trees until late February-March.

The best time for pruning fruit trees for fruit production is in late winter, into early spring, depending on the weather. See the following publication for more information on fruit tree pruning.

[Pruning Fruit Trees](#), Nebraska Extension

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2035&context=extensionhist>



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Ever wondered why people call the Earth the Blue Planet?



That's because 70% of the Earth's surface
is covered with water!

Of the 70% of water covering the Earth only 3% of it is fresh, the
other 97% of it is salted.

Of this 3% more than 2% resides in ice sheets and glaciers,
meaning less than 1% is in lakes and rivers.

Due to the amount of water covering the Earth, it would be one of
the brightest planets to look upon from a distance due to the way in
which the water would reflect the Sun's rays.

Source: Random Facts Website