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Dryland Farming in a Drought

Tom Dorn
UNL Extension Educator

What Changes Should Farmers Make in a Dry Year?

The obvious change is to conserve moisture as much as possible. Each tillage pass results in the loss of at least an inch of moisture from the upper soil profile. Reducing or eliminating tillage can make a huge yield difference when moisture is lacking.

Another benefit to reduced tillage is the mulching effect of crop residues that remain on the soil surface. Weeds compete with crops for moisture. Obtain weed control early using shallow tillage or burn-down herbicides and keep crops weed-free as possible.

With below-normal soil moisture prevalent in much of Nebraska, producers may consider changing how they use fertilizer this spring. Dry soil influences how fertilizer can be applied and what happens to it after application.

Fertilizer Application Rates

Producers should carefully consider application rates this spring, particularly for nitrogen, which is usually based on expected yield. With low subsoil moisture in much of the state, the yield potential for dryland crops will be reduced compared to recent years. Farmers should be realistic when setting yield expectations and consider fertilizing for lower yields than last year on dryland fields.

Anhydrous Ammonia

The primary concern with anhydrous ammonia application into dry soil is retention of the fertilizer. Silt loams and heavier textured soils in Nebraska generally contain adequate moisture to react with and retain ammonia, even when seemingly very dry, as long as the injection depth is 5–6 inches below the soil surface and application rates are not excessive.

Of greater concern is the ability to seal the injection slot. If the soil is very dry and cloddy, the farmer may observe white “smoke” behind the applicator. This “smoke” is actually water vapor condensed from the air by escaping ammonia. Although it takes a lot of “smoke” to add up to significant fertilizer loss, it’s still best to try to minimize fertilizer loss. If vapor loss cannot be minimized by 1) going to a deeper injection depth, 2) slowing down, or 3) reducing the application rate, it may be advisable to wait for better soil conditions or switch to a different form of nitrogen fertilizer.

Ammonia applied last fall may have partially nitrified and could be leached; however, dry soil conditions have generally minimized any nitrate leaching from see FERTILIZER RATES on next page

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Nebraska 4-Hers Earn Back-to-Back National Champions at Horse Nationals! — see page 12

http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu
Using Summer Annual Forage Grasses to Stretch Pastures in a Dry Year

Forage sorghum

Storage Methods to Reduce Hay Losses

Fertilizer Rates

continued from page 1
fall-applied ammonia. Continued dry conditions will insure that fall-applied nitrogen will be in the root zone when the crop needs it this spring.

Broadcast Fertilizers

Both dry and liquid fertilizers broadcast on the soil surface will be influenced by large amounts of residue, which may not have decomposed significantly due to the dry winter. Urea and nitrogen solutions can lose nitrogen to the atmosphere through ammonia volatilization when surface-applied to high-residue soils. If incorporated with residue, the nitrogen in broadcast fertilizers can be immobilized in decomposing residue, resulting in delayed availability to the crop.

Starter Fertilizers

Producers should be cautious about applying starter fertilizer with the seed this spring. Starter fertilizers which contain nitrogen and potassium are applied at planting—thus they will draw moisture away from the seed, resulting in germination damage and/or seedling vigor. This effect will be accentuated with dry soils. Placing starter fertilizer in a band a couple of inches away from the seed will minimize the potential for germination damage.

Source: Richard R. Ferguson, Extension Soil Specialist, South Central Research Extension Center

Tom Dorn
UNL Extension Educator

Hay is selling at a premium due to the drought last year which has not shown much sign of ending anytime soon. It is, therefore, even more important to minimize losses from spoilage and to maintain high quality. Hay stored outside will be damaged by rain, snow, wind, and ice. If possible, store hay inside or cover it with a canvas or plastic tarp. The average round bale stored out in the weather loses about one fourth of its original nutrients during storage. For instance, do you usually line up round bales so the twine sides touch each other? Or stack your bales? If so, extra spoilage will occur where these bales touch because rain, snow, and ice will gather in these spots instead of running off. Round bales butted end-to-end, cigar-like, usually have less spoilage because there are no “valleys” to collect moisture. It may seem remote when you are putting up hay in the heat of summer, but think about where snow tends to drift before deciding where to store bales in the field.

Prevailing winter winds are from the north or northwest in eastern Nebraska. Placing hay next to fence lines or trees can result in the bales being engulfed in snow drifts later on. Even when placed on open ground, round bales in east-west rows often have drifts on the south side. As snow melts, it soaks into the bales or makes the ground muddy. Plus, the north side never gets any sun so it’s slow to dry. Bales oriented north-and-south will cause fewer drifts to form next to the bales and the hay will dry more quickly.

Most important is the placement of your bales. Always put bales on higher, well-drained ground so water drains away from them. Besides placing them on raised ground, place the bales on a bed of crushed rock, on railroad ties, or on pallets to keep the bottoms dry. This will also reduce problems getting your hay harvested due to snow drifts or mud.

Just a little pre-planning can save valuable hay and frustrations next winter.

For more information
UNL Extension NebGuide “Summer Annual Forage Grasses” (G2183) available at the extension office or online at www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g2183.pdf

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Back to Farm Views
Fire Prevention on the Acreage, Farm, and Ranch

According to the Nebraska Forest Service, 2012 was a bad year for wildland fires. Over 501,950 acres of land in Nebraska burned as a result of 1,503 fires statewide. More acres of land were affected in 2012, than all the acreage affected by fire from 2001–2011 combined. In and around Lancaster County alone, 158 fires occurred.

A fire in a rural area is far more serious than a fire in a town or city where the fire department and fire-fighting resources are readily available. The most effective fire prevention device yet invented is YOUR attitude. With a positive fire prevention attitude, and by following the prevention measures suggested here, you can enjoy your country home with confidence.

Around the Home

Each year fire damages or destroys many homes that could have been saved if simple precautions had been taken before the fire struck. It’s the little things that count.

• Treat wood roofing material with a fire retardant material.
• Remove tree limbs that hang over your roof.
• Remove all leaves and clutter from house gutters.
• Mow your yard regularly to reduce flammable vegetation, and remove all debris piles.
• Install a spark arrester on your chimney. Inspect chimneys each year and keep them in good repair.
• If burning is allowed, place the barrel in an area cleared of flammable materials at least 10 feet around the barrel.
• Cover your burn barrel with a top screen made of 1/4” wire mesh.
• Fuel storage tanks (LP Gas, welding gas, oxygen cylinders, gasoline, diesel, etc.) should be located at least 30 feet from buildings and at least 10 feet from any combustibles. They should be securely fastened to firm, non-combustible supports and resting on a solid foundation.
• Check lightning protection and grounding.
• Check TV Antenna stability and grounding.
• Have electrical wiring and fuse boxes inspected. Replace worn or damaged wiring and use only fuse approved for the wiring.
• Make certain stoves and heaters are installed as per code with local and state fire codes.

Machinery Fires

Checking for and fixing fire hazards before starting work each day will reduce the chance of costly equipment fires. Look for:

• any build up of plant residue around the machine, exhaust system, belts and chains;
• damaged exhaust system components;
• worn or overly fray drive belts;
• broken or exposed electrical wiring;
• the odor of burning electrical wiring;
• worn or misaligned moving parts, which can indicate the lack of lubricant; and
• signs of leaking fluids, oil, and fuel.

Flammable Liquids

Flammable liquids, such as gasoline, diesel, oils, and solvents are frequently used on farms and acreages. Most liquids of this type are stored in garage, shop, or maintenance areas, which also contain many sources of ignition. Extreme caution must be taken with these products.

• Flammable liquids should be stored in a designated area away from all sources of heat, such as welders, grinders, heaters, electric motors, and hot engines.
• Flammable liquids should be stored in Underwriter Laboratories (UL) approved containers. Plastic milk jugs, pop bottles, glass jars, and coffee cans are not approved containers.
• Use flammable liquids in well-ventilated areas. Vapors from these liquids can travel great distances to an ignition source.

Safe Fueling

Always use caution when fueling equipment. The few seconds saved are insignificant when compared to the loss of expensive machinery, or the weeks, even months, spent in a hospital due to carelessness.

• Never refuel equipment with the engine running.
• Allow hot engines to cool for 15 minutes before refueling.
• Extinguish all open flames and smoking materials before refueling.
• If fuel spills on an engine, wipe away any excess and allow the fumes to dissipate.

Open Burning

History shows that as long as man has been farming, he has used fire as a tool to clear fields. As man has been farming, he has also caused countless lives and millions of dollars to be lost to careless burning practices.

• Check local, county, and state laws on open burning. Always obtain a permit to burn from the local fire department. Be sure to notify the fire department when you start burning.
• Be aware of the weather conditions and be flexible. If weather conditions are unfavorable or forecast to be unfavorable, postpone burning to a later date.
• Be aware of your surroundings and other combustibles. Protect build- ings and fences.
• Build a fire break to contain a fire in the area to be burned.
• Keep firefighting tools, such as rakes, shovels, and garden hoses, close at hand, for small fires. Discs, plows, and large sprayers are needed for large fires. Have plenty of help.
• Remember, fires can grow extremely fast. A small fire can rapidly become a raging wildfire with a gust of wind. If a fire appears to be getting away, call your fire department immediately. Never leave a fire unattended.

Livestock and Fire

While livestock are not normally considered a fire hazard, the environment in which they are placed can contain many fire hazards in the form of tools and equipment.

• Secure heat lamps to a solid object that will not fall into bedding materials if bumped.
• Use non-combustible bedding, such as dry sand instead of straw, when using heat lamps.
• If it is necessary to use extension cords for heat lamps or portable heaters, make sure the wire size is sufficient for the electrical load.
• Keep all electrical wiring out of areas that can be accessed by livestock. Prevent damage to wiring insulation by using conduit to protect the wire from livestock chewing or rubbing.
• Install electric fences properly, with sufficient clearance from combustibles.

Remember

• Look for fire hazards every day. When you find a fire hazard, repair it or get rid of it.
• Good housekeeping is good fire prevention. A clean, orderly work place and well-kept equipment and tools are less likely to produce fire.
• Fire extinguishers should be placed in areas where they are readily accessible.
• Check fire extinguishers monthly, making certain they are properly charged.
• Don’t sacrifice your or your family’s safety and livelihood by being careless with fire.

In Case of Fire

When a fire is discovered, call the fire department (911) at once. DO NOT attempt to fight the fire yourself. Remember, any delay in the arrival of the fire department can be disastrous.

Keep the fire department’s telephone number posted prominently near the telephone. Keep directions to your farm or acreage near the phone to aid visitors or individuals who do not know where your area is located.

Source: Nebraska Forest Service

Learn about various aspects of gardening from UNL Extension experts. Join us for an exciting “Gardening at Lunch” webinar series, right from your desk at work or home. During each program you can listen and interact with the speakers. You will need a computer with Internet access and sound to participate.

Cost is $10 per program. Must pre-register at http://marketplace.unl.edu/extension.

• March 6: Get Ready for Spring Vegetable Gardening — Learn ideal planting time of vegetables. Also get tips on growing strong, healthy transplants at home.

• April 3: Plant Diseases — Learn how to identify plant diseases, and how to treat them.

• May 1: Outdoor Insects — Learn how to identify the good insects from the bad!

Acidified Foods Workshop for Small Food Processors

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln Food Processing Center will present a three-day work- shop “Better Process Control School for Acidified Foods” April 8–10 at the Downtown Holiday Inn, 141 N. 9th St. This school is suitable for anyone requiring certification; however, it has been designed specifically for individuals with little or no food science or food safety background, small processors, and those selling products at farmers’ markets and other local events. The school includes hands-on basic training as well as testing and certification.

The Food and Drug Administration defines acidified foods as products with a high acidity level, or a pH level below 4.6, and a high level of moisture, or a water activity above 0.85. These foods include beans, cucumbers, cabbage, arti- chokes, cauliflower, peppers, salsas, some sauces and fish, singly or in any combination. Exempted from FDA regulations are acid foods, unacidified foods, fermented foods, carbonated beverages, jams, jellies, preserves, and refrigerated foods.

By law, each processor of these types of foods must operate with a trained supervisor on hand at all times. The Food Processing Center is certified by the FDA to teach this school. This school does not satisfy requirements for permitted to sell the food.

Upon successful completion of the school, participants become certified and their names are submitted to the FDA. The school is taught by faculty and staff experts from the Food Processing Center and is offered two times per year. Space is limited — early registration is encouraged. Registration deadline is March 3. For more information or to register, go to http://fpc.unl.edu or contact Jill Gifford at 402-472-2819.

Gardening at Lunch Webinars
Nuts for Nutrition

Choose MyPlate (a recommended food pattern to help people implement the dietary guidelines) states, “In general, 1 ounce of meat, poultry, fish, 1/4 cup cooked beans, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, or 1/2 cup cooked lentils or legumes is approximately 1 ounce equivalent from the Protein Food Group.”

A Handful of Nuts

How many nuts are in a handful of nuts? A handful equals about 1 ounce. This serving size corresponds to the serving size listed on the “Nutrition Facts” panel on food labels.

The Dietary Guidelines also recommend fat intake should emphasize healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, such as those found in seafood, nuts, seeds, and oils.

Microwave Toasting

Here’s a quick and cool way (with minimal clean-up) to toast nuts and seeds, based on information I received from Linda Gosssett, MPA, CFCS, Extension Educator – CFCS, University of Idaho. This has become my favorite method for toasting smaller amounts of nuts and seeds. This method works well for amounts ranging from a tablespoon to 1/2 cup of nuts/seeds. With larger amounts, some are likely to turn dark quicker than others. The time will vary depending on the size, type, and temperature of the nuts/seeds and also may be influenced by the type of microwave.

1. Spread from a tablespoon to 1/2 cup of nuts or seeds evenly in a single layer in a flat, microwave-safe dish, such as a 9-inch microwave-safe pie plate.
2. Add a small amount of soft butter or margarine or add a small amount of oil to the nuts/seeds. Use about 1/2 teaspoon fat per 1/2 cup of nuts/seeds; use proportionally less for smaller amounts of nuts/seeds.
3. Place nuts or seeds in a single layer in an ungreased shallow pan or RIMMED baking sheet. With this method, the nuts/seeds all touch the skillet may look more GOLDEN than BROWN. More GOLDEN than BROWN.
4. Microwave for 1–2 minutes or until they are lightly browned and smell fragrant.

Oven Toasting

Preheat oven to 350°F. Toast nuts or seeds in the refrigerator until you’re ready to use them. A handful of nuts may help you resist the gooey sweet trail mix and healthy vitamins and minerals to help you resist the gooey sweet trail mix.

Sunflower seeds (sliced almonds or sesame seeds) could be finished at any time one minute at a time. Larger amounts of nuts/seeds could be finished at 2 minutes. Larger amounts of nuts, such as slivered or whole almonds, walnuts, pecans, and sunflower seeds will take an additional minute or two to become lightly browned and smell fragrant.

One jalapeño pepper, minced

1 1/2 cups zucchini

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 1/2 cups bell pepper

1 1/2 cups canned tomatoes

1 1/2 cups vegetable broth

1 1/2 cups black beans (cooked)

2 cups kidney beans (cooked)

1 jalapeño pepper, minced

Stove-top Toasting

Stove-top toasting works well for small batches of nuts or seeds. With this method, the parts of the nuts or seeds touching the skillet may become darker, unlike the oven method where they become more of an overall golden color.

1. Toast nuts BEFORE chopping them into smaller pieces.
2. Heat nuts or seeds in a dry, heavy skillet over medium heat for 1–2 minutes or until they’re golden brown and they give off a rich, toasty fragrance. Watch them closely when using this method as it’s easy to burn them.
3. Stir or toss nuts or seeds frequently for even toasting.
4. Remove from pan to cool.

$Stretch Your Food Dollar By Freezing Foods

VEGGIE CHILI (6 servings)

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1/2 cup onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 1/2 cups zucchini (or vegetable of your choice)

1 red or green bell pepper, chopped

4 cups tomatoes, chopped (these can also be canned tomatoes)

1 tablespoon chili powder

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1 1/2 cups vegetable broth

2 cups black beans (cooked)

2 cups kidney beans (cooked)

1 jalapeño pepper, minced

In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic. Cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add zucchini and bell pepper. Cook 5 minutes, stirring often. Add remaining ingredients, stir well to combine. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve hot.
The goal of this week is to create national awareness about the risk of injury or death due to poisoning. The Environmental Protection Agency reports in the past year, America's 57 poison control centers fielded 4 million calls, treating 2.4 million human poison exposures and handling 1.6 million poison center hotline applications (e.g., phone call, doorbell, etc.).

Precaution Steps
Families are encouraged to take precautions and safeguard against poisoning. Some steps to take are:
- Post the Poison Control Centers’ national helpline number, 1-800-222-1222, near your phone. Program the number into your phone’s “address book” or redial feature.
- Read the product label first and follow the directions to the letter.
- Use the safest possible cleaning products. Look for the Design for the Environment (DfE) label on products.
- Never leave products unattended when you are using them.
- Keep out of reach of children.
- Keep products out of the reach of the container (e.g.,ロック).
**Canna ‘South Pacific Scarlet’**

2013 AAS Flower Award Winner

This stunning first-year flowering echinacea captures the spirit of the North American plains by producing a delightful mix of flower colors from rich purple, pink, red, and orange tones to lighter yellows, creams, and white. This wide range of flower colors on well-branched, durable plants are sure to please the color preferences of any gardener. As an added bonus, ‘Cheyenne Spirit’ does not require a lot of water and offers a wide range of uses from the perennial border, in a mass landscape planting, in a butterfly garden, or as cut flower. The plant is 2 feet tall and grows in full sun.

**Geranium ‘Pinto Premium White to Rose’**

2013 AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner

Flower petals start out white then deepen to rose-pink as flowers mature, giving an attractive bicolor effect. Dense, well-branched plants have deep green leaves with darker areas that contrast beautifully with the light-colored flowers. ‘Pinto Premium White to Rose’ has numerous 5-inch blooms that are long-lasting in the garden. It is a great choice for carefree, colorful summer garden beds or patio containers.

**Melon ‘Melemon’**

2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner

The earliness, high yield on healthy, strong plants and superior taste all contributed to this melon becoming an AAS Winner. Judges related the taste of this melon to honeydew, but with a surprising and delicious tanginess. A uniform fruit shape makes it perfect for market growers as well as home gardeners. Each personalized fruit has refreshing, crisp flesh and a unique sweet-tart taste.

**Tomato ‘Jasper’**

2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner

Excellent taste, a long harvest window, and outstanding performance in the trials contributes to this cherry tomato’s success. Judges liked the texture and sweetness of the tomato as well as the uniformity of the fruits that grow on vigorous, healthy plants, ‘Jasper’ is a high-yielding variety with fruits that stay on the vine and then hold well after ripening both on the vine and post-harvest. Vigorous vines require little or no fertilization. An added bonus is fusarium resistance and the ability to overcome weather-related stresses.

**Watermelon ‘Harvest Moon’**

2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner

The first ever hybrid, triploid seedless watermelon to win a coveted AAS Award. Similar to the popular heirloom variety, ‘Moon and Stars,’ ‘Harvest Moon’ is an improvement in that it features healthy, shorter vines that produce medium-sized fruits and sweet, crisp pinkish-red flesh. ‘Harvest Moon’ retains the familiar variegated rind with yellow dots, but is seedless, earlier to ripen, higher yielding, and better tasting.

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**Pruning Overgrown Shrubs**

Shrubs are valuable assets to a home landscape. Shrubs are often planted for their ornamental characteristics, such as flowers, colorful fall foliage, or attractive fruit. They can provide privacy, block wind, and attract wildlife. For shrubs to perform well in the landscape, home gardeners must prune them properly. Proper pruning helps to maintain plant health, control, or shape plant growth, and stimulate flower production.

Many deciduous shrubs (those that lose their leaves in the fall) can be kept healthy and vigorous by removing a few of the largest, oldest stems every 2-3 years. Unfortunately, many individuals fail to prune their shrubs because of a lack of time, knowledge, or courage. As a result of this neglect, shrubs often become leggy and unattractive. Flowering shrubs not pruned properly may not bloom well.

Proper pruning can rejuvenate overgrown, deciduous shrubs. One method is to prune them back over a 3-year period. The first year, remove one-third of the large, old stems at ground level.

Another way to prune overgrown, deciduous shrubs is to cut them back to within 4-6 inches of the ground in March or early April. This severe pruning will induce a large number of shoots to develop during the growing season. In late winter of the following year, select and retain several strong, healthy shoots and remove all others at ground level. Head (cut) back the retained shoots to encourage branching. Large, overgrown lilacs, honeysuckles, dogwoods, spireas, and forsythias may be pruned in this manner. Lilacs rejuvenated by this method will not bloom for 3-5 years.

Deciduous, formal hedges (those pruned to a definite size and shape), such as privets, that become open and leggy, can be rejuvenated by pruning them back to within 4-6 inches of the ground in late winter/early spring. To obtain a full, thick hedge, prune (shear) the shoots often as they grow back in spring and summer. Make sure the base of the hedge is slightly wider than the top to encourage growth close to the ground.

Large, overgrown evergreen shrubs, such as junipers, are a more difficult problem. Junipers possess bare or dead cones in their centers. They can not be pruned back severely because they are incapable of initiating new growth from bare branches. Large, overgrown junipers that have become too large or unattractive will need to be removed and new shrubs planted.

Although many overgrown, deciduous shrubs can be rejuvenated or rejuvenated, it’s much easier to prune them on a regular basis. Regular pruning will keep the shrubs full, healthy, and attractive.

Source: Richard Sauron, Department of Horticulture, Iowa State

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**Garden Guide**

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

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Buy a notebook and use it to keep all your gardening information. List what you plant in the garden. Include the name of seeds, companies, plant name, variety, planting date, and harvest date. During the growing season keep notes on how well the plant does. If the variety is susceptible to disease, record what was used to treat any problems. All this information will be helpful in planning future gardens.

Place birdhouses built this winter outdoors this month. Birds will use them into individual pots. Plant outdoors are large enough to handle, transplant them into individual pots. Plant outdoors after the danger of frost is past.

Echinacea

‘Cheyenne Spirit’

2013 AAS Flower Award Winner

Flower petals start out white then deepen to rose-pink as flowers mature, giving an attractive bicolor effect. Dense, well-branched plants have deep green leaves with darker areas that contrast beautifully with the light-colored flowers. ‘Pinto Premium White to Rose’ has numerous 5-inch blooms that are long-lasting in the garden. It is a great choice for carefree, colorful summer garden beds or patio containers.

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**Images courtesy All-America Selections**
Ants in the Wintertime

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Pavement ants prefer to live under objects on the soil surface, such as slab-constructed houses. Larger yellow ants (also called citronella ants) produce winged swarms in December or January.

1. The ant colony is living under a concrete slab of your house. In Nebraska, most ant species live in the soil and many prefer to live under objects on the soil surface. A good example of this is pavement ant, named for its nesting site. (These are often the ants you see building ant hills between sidewalk squares.) Another species, the larger yellow ants (also called citronella ants because they smell like lemons) are also found underneath slabs, even as deep as under the basement.

Slab-constructed houses, which are often have ant colonies living under the slab. Because we keep our houses and basements warm in the winter, the soil under the concrete slab stays warm. Radiant heat, with heat ducts, coils, or pipes in the floor, greatly encourages ant activity in the winter.

If these are nuisance ants, like pavement ants, worker ants will forage for food, even when it’s very cold outdoors. To completely eliminate this problem, you must eliminate the colony which is under the slab. This is very difficult to do and may be very expensive, especially if you hire a pest control company to inject chemicals through the floor into the soil. Ant baits may or may not work, but they are worth a try. You will have to be very persistent and refrain from using any insecticidal sprays which may kill ants or repel them away from the bait. Bait in bait stations will only work if the ants are able to feed on it. Many times, the ants walk around the bait stations. Ants are more likely to feed on liquid ant bait placed on cardboard squares. If you don’t like to see them in the bait, it doesn’t matter how much you put out, because this approach won’t work.

During the winter, some ants may forage for food inside the home, but healthy colonies often produce winged swarmers in December or January when colonies live under a slab. These swarmers die within a couple days. (Swarmers don’t feed, so don’t try to bait them.) No treatment is necessary; a vacuum cleaner may be helpful getting rid of these ants.

2. The second situation producing active ants in the winter is when an ant colony is living inside an exterior wall. If you are seeing ants — either winged swarmers or non-winged workers — emerging from an exterior wall, you probably have an ant colony living there. All ant colonies need moisture to survive, so ants living inside the wall usually means there is a moisture source which contributes to the colony being there. The moisture source could be from leaky plumbing behind a tub or shower or in the walls, where even if it’s not sealed well and leak, porous siding, a poor vapor barrier producing condensation, or a leaky roof.

The non-chemical way to get rid of an ant colony inside the wall is to eliminate the moisture problem. Without moisture, the ant colony will disappear on its own. Pest control companies may be able to help with this. Many of them have moisture meters, which can detect moisture inside the wall.

Insecticides can be used to eliminate colonies, but, it may be necessary to target the colony, which is inside the house. I recommend homeowners work with a pest control professional who has products and equipment to do this type of work.

There is one other treatment that might be helpful. In the spring and summer, when ants are active, a perimeter treatment of Termidor™ may eliminate the ant colony. It only works if the ants travel through the treated area. Termidor™ is a professional-use-only product and is not available in hardware stores. According to label directions, this product can only be used twice a year, and it cannot be used inside the home.

However, if the moisture problem isn’t addressed, these areas continue to be attractive to insects which may re-colonize the area. In addition, mold and other damage from moisture may continue.

Cats Are in the News Again

Sonni Cochran
UNL Extension Associate

On Jan. 29, 2013 “The Impact of Free-ranging Domestic Cats on Wildlife of the United States,” research study was published in the journal Nature Communications. The study is available on-line and it made the news. After the study was published, headlines like “That Cuddy Kitty is Deadlier Than You Think — the New York Times” or “Cat Kill Billions of Animals a Year — CBS News,” are hard to ignore.

The study was authored by scientists from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is reported to be the most comprehensive analysis of information on the issues of domestic cats. Researchers found cats kill far more native wildlife than previ- ously known. In fact, they found cats kill between 1.4 billion and 3.7 billion birds and between 6.9 billion and 20.7 billion small mammals, which included mostly native species, such as meadow voles and chipmunks. The cats who killed most of the wildlife were feral cats and free-range cats allowed to roam extensively outside. Barn cats are an example of free-range cats and they can be tame or wild. Feral cats are domestic cats that have gone wild. The study also found pets were responsible for about a third of the songbird and native wildlife killed.

Once published, these studies have always created passionate reactions. This time is no different. Feral cat advocates dismissed the research as another attempt to demonize cats by using sketchy results. While others say the study shows efforts to control feral cat populations with sterilizations aren’t solving the feral cat problem.

I like cats, so I get it. I’m not anti-cat. I have owned cats and grew up with cats. I never allowed my cats outside because they were so cute and I did not want them to leave me. Keeping them inside means they live longer, healthier lives. I also know cats are indiscriminate killers. While growing up, our well-fed farm cats brought “gifts” to the front porch which included parts of songbirds (usually a few feathers and tiny bird legs and feet), shrews, baby bunnies, small snakes, and even weasels.

Here are some facts about feral cats we can’t ignore:

• Domesticated cats are not native to the United States. Feral cats are not pets, They are different than any other invasive species.

• Feral cats are responsible for significant losses to popula- tions of native songbirds, gamebirds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

• Predation of cats on birds has an economic impact of more than $17 billion dollars each year in the United States (based on economic activity of bird watchers, hunters, and bird rearers).

• The majority of feral cats are not vaccinated. Unvaccinated feral cats can transmit several diseases to humans and other animals including rabies, toxoplasmosis, cat scratch fever, plague, ringworm and salmonellosis. Feral cats are also carriers of tapeworms and ticks that can transmit disease to humans.

We can all help reduce the feral cat problem by promoting responsible pet ownership. Make sure every cat you own is vaccinated, neutered/ spayed. Encourage others to do the same. Keep cats inside. Your cats will live longer, be healthier, and they can’t harm wildlife.

If you don’t want a cat or kittens, don’t think you are doing the cat a favor by dumping it off in another neighborhood or on a country road. Take unwanted animals to your local animal shelter.

If you are having a problem with feral cats, read UNL Extension publication “Feral Cats and Their Management” (EC1781) online at http://go.unl.edu/mpo. This practical, research-based publi- cation reviews options legally available to control problem cats. It also covers responsible pet ownership. We know not everyone can or will be able to do all of the control options, but it is our responsibility to provide you with the information you need to make informed choices.
4-H Speech & PSA

Contests are open to all 4-H’ers — need not be enrolled in a specific project. Youth may choose to participate in either the Speech or PSA contests. For resources, guidelines, and examples, go to http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/Contest/speech.shtml. If questions, contact Cole Meador at cmeador2@unl.edu or 402-441-7180.

Speech/PSA Workshop, March 28

Learn more at a Speech/PSA workshop on Thursday, March 28, 6 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Out of ideas? We will help you get started. Already started! Bring your completed speech/PSA to practice or get suggestions. We will teach you Audacity basics so you can add sound effects and edit to make your final PSA perfect. There will be computers available to work with, or bring your own. Cole will record your speeches for 4-H’ers ready to do so — come in anytime after 4 p.m.

PSA Contest, Due April 12

In the Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest, 4-H’ers submit a 60 second “radio commercial” promoting 4-H. Submit a PSA via CD playable on any standard stereo equipment to extension by Friday, April 12. If you do not have the capabilities to record a PSA, contact Cole to set up a recording time. Results and comment sheets will be handed out at the 4-H Speech Contest on April 21. The 2013 PSA theme is “Taking the Lead.”

Speech Contest, April 21

The 4-H Speech Contest will be held Sunday, April 21, 1 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Register by April 12 by calling 402-441-7180 or emailing cmeador2@unl.edu. Provide your name, speech title, age division, and if it is “Speech for YouTube.” Note new age divisions this year. New registration forms must be postmarked by March 1. Space is limited, so register early!

4-H Horse Incentive Program Begins

The 2013 Lancaster County 4-H Horse Incentive Program began Jan. 1 and runs through June 30. 4-H’ers can earn points or log hours for spending time on horse-related activities and win fun prizes! Forms are available online at http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/horsenews.shtml or can be picked up at the extension office. This year there are new ways to earn incentive points along with activities spent registered during the fair. Among the ways, points can be earned by writing a fictional horse story or creating a book (e.g., a horse story, a horse poem, or horse art). Additional points can be earned by logging on either the official calendar log sheet, the official log sheet, or a combination of the two. It’s not too late to get started. If you have any questions, call Marty at 402-441-7180.

4-H Dog Skill-a-Thon, March 26

Want to test your dog knowldge? Come to the 4th annual 4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon Tuesday, March 26 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Youth do not need to be present the entire time — just come at your convenience, it usually takes 1-2 hours. There will be a variety of topics that will test your knowledge including: parts, parasites, breeds, conformation, nutrition, and more. Open to all youth ages 8-18 — you do not have to be enrolled in 4-H and do not need a dog to participate. Must preregister by March 19 by contacting Cole Meador at cmeador2@unl.edu or 402-441-7180 (there is no entry form). Resource materials for Skill-a-thon are available at the extension office.

4-H Furniture Painting Workshop, April 20

Mark your calendars for the upcoming “Hueque to Jewels” furniture painting workshop on Saturday, April 20, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Open to 4-H youth ages 8-18. Check the April Nebline for more information.

Kiwanis Karnival, April 13

The annual Kiwanis Karnival, a FREE family event, is sponsored by the Lincoln Center Kiwanis. This year, it will be held Saturday, April 13, 6-8 p.m. at Elliott Elementary School, 225 S. 26th St., Lincoln. The Karnival features carnival type games for the kids, bingo for adults, prizes, snacks, fun, and fellowship. Lincoln Center Kiwanis has sponsored this event for over 50 years — providing prizes and snacks. 4-H clubs are needed to provide carnival-type booths. This is a great community service and leadership activity for clubs. If your 4-H club or family would like to have a booth or for more information, call Lorene at 402-441-7180. Come join the fun!

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4-H Achievement Night

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County and 4-H Council presented Lancaster County 4-H Achievement Night on Feb. 12. 4-H'ers, 4-H clubs, and 4-H leaders were recognized for their 2012 achievements. The Lancaster County Board of Commissioners signed a proclamation declaring February 12 as “4-H Achievement Day.” Lancaster County 4-H congratulates all 4-H youth who commit themselves to excellence! We also thank all 4-H volunteers who donate their time and talents to youth! For a complete list of award, scholarship, and pin recipients (as well as additional photos) go to http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h.

NEBRASKA DIAMOND CLOVER
The Nebraska 4-H Diamond Clover Program is a statewide program which encourages 4-H members to engage in a variety of projects and activities. At the beginning of the 4-H year, youth choose goals from a provided list, and at the end of the 4-H year, complete a report which documents their accomplishments.

LEVEL 1 – AMETHYST: Kieran Burke, Catherine Hytrek, Joshua Hytrek, Megan Lange, Sophie Polk, Anna Sump, David Swatek, Addison Wanser
LEVEL 2 – AQUAMARINE: Kiera Bobcock, Nathan Becker, Cassie Brown, Nathan Gabel, Valerie Griess, Kayla Humphrey, Rachael Lange
LEVEL 3 – RUBY: Abby Bobcock, Elizabeth Garza, James Griess, Brooke Kreikemeier, Jared Nielsen, Madelaine Polk, Jenna White, Alyssa Zimmer
Level 4 – Sapphire: Morgan Cuttlers, Valerie Gabel, Victoria Garza, Holly Hillebran, Emma Lanik, Caleb Nielsen, Paige Roach
LEVEL 5 – EMERALD: Madeline Gabel, Kylee Plager, Sheridan Swatek

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS
Presented to 4-H’ers who have completed the most hours of community service. Award recipients receive a $30 Activity Certificate from Lancaster County 4-H Council redeemable towards 4-H activities and supplies.

AGE 14 AND OVER: Victoria Garza, Holly Hillebran, Austin Hurt, Kylee Plager, Paige Roach, Sheridan Swatek
AGE 8 – 13: Valerie Gabel, Elizabeth Garza, Kyle Hurt, McKenzia Kapperman, Brooke Kreikemeier, Emma Lanik, Addison Wanser, Alyssa Zimmer

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS
Presented to individuals 16 years of age or older who have excelled in his/her involvement with the Lancaster County 4-H program. Selection is based on participation in a wide variety and depth of 4-H activities.

ELLIS DEARMONT, Kaiya Green

4-H Council Scholarships

OUTSTANDING 4-H MEMBERS
Presented to individuals 14 years of age or older who have excelled in his/her involvement with the Lancaster County 4-H program. Selection is based on participation in a wide variety and depth of 4-H activities.

ELLIS DEARMONT, Kaiya Green

4-H Council Scholarships

Lancaster County Commissioner Jane Roybold presented the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners’ proclamation declaring Feb. 12 as “4-H Achievement Day.”

NEBRASKA 4-H CLUBS OF EXCELLENCE
Nebraska 4-H Clubs of Excellence have met criteria outlined by the State 4-H office.

4-H Explorers, All American Kids, Fantastic 4, Joe’s Clover Knights, Pick-A-Pig, Rabbits R Us, Rock Creek Ranchers, Rock’n Riders, Star City Cornhuskers, Super Shamrocks

CAREER PORTFOLIOS
Career Portfolios are a record of an individual’s 4-H career.

COUNTY WINNERS
Cassie Meyer: Animal Science
Sheridan Swatek: Healthy Lifestyles Education

NOMINATED TO REPRESENT LANCASTER COUNTY AT DISTRICT COMPETITION
Cassie Meyer: Animal Science
Sheridan Swatek: Healthy Lifestyles Education, Leadership and Citizenship
Madeline Gabel: Consumer & Family Science; Healthy Living

I DARE YOU LEADERSHIP AWARD
Awarded on behalf of the American Youth Foundation to juniors or seniors who strive to achieve their personal best and make a positive difference in their community.

Rachel Johnson, Caitlyn Schmidt

4-H MERITORIOUS SERVICE
Lorene Bartos started her Extension career in 1973. She has served many roles in her 40 years of service, including the 4-H development program. In 1976, Lorene helped start the 4-H Embryology program in local schools. She helped with the development of Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center (camp) and currently is a board member. Lorene has dedicated countless hours to the Lancaster County Fair. She organizes “Fair Fun Day” for child care groups and last year organized the 4-H historical displays. An instructor at 4-H Clover College, she teaches a variety of workshops. As a member of Lincoln Center Kiwanis, she organizes the annual Kiwanis Carnival and coordinates the Outstanding 4-H Clubs and college scholarship sponsored by Kiwanis.

Extension Educator Lorene Bartos pictured with Extension Unit Leader Gary Bergman.
Tips for Coping With Drought-Related Stress
Farm/Ranch Stress and Disaster Stress

Stressors Identified by Farm/Ranch Families
Farm/ranch-specific worries include:
• Rising expenses & low prices
• Concerns about farm/ranch finances
• Machinery breakdown
• Prolonged bad weather or natural disaster
• Weather-related crop loss
• Delay in planting/harvest
• Time pressures & long work hours
• Farm viability
• Worries shared with most families
• Death in family
• Divorce or separation
• Major illness or disability
• Aging parents who need care
• Worries about owing money
• Vacation
• Changing economic conditions

Other resources for stress management for farm/ranch families:
http://droughtresources.unl.edu — an index of articles provided by the University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension that address drought issues for confidential mental health services for persons affected by the rural crisis
http://dhrs.ne.gov/behavioral_health — official Nebraska Government Website with a listing of licensed mental health counselors throughout the State of Nebraska

What Help is Available?
Information about community mental health services in Nebraska can be found at:
• COMHT Program 1-800-444-0258 — the Nebraska Counseling, Outreach and Mental Health Therapy offers no-cost vouchers for confidential mental health services for persons affected by the rural crisis
• Nebraska Farm Hotline 1-800-444-0258
• Farm Mediation Clinic 1-800-446-4071
• www.legalservicesnebraska.com — Nebraska Legal Aid
• the NRRS provides 1-800 numbers as well as websites and email contacts to help you connect faster to the services you are seeking.
• www.nebraska.org — the Nebraska Drought Violence, Sexual Assault Coalition
• www.community.org — Community Action of Nebraska
• www.ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov — Department of Health and Humans Services- food stamps, Medicaid, Bill Connection etc.
• www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/issues/stress-safety/index.html — an index of resources for the University of Wisconsin Extension offices offers an index of resources for farming, responding to and relaxing stress targeted for farm families.
• www.extension.umn.edu/extreme-weather/droughtfire — University of Minnesota Extension Service sponsors drought and fire information
• www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf1062.pdf — brochure includes listening skills and a referral guide for farmers who need more assistance
• www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf1062.pdf — an index of resources that address strong families and communities.
• When Should We Seek Help?
If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems continue for more than a few weeks or if someone is having feelings of extreme hopelessness or extreme anger, talking about suicide or is violent, it is important to seek help immediately. Contact a physician or community mental health center as soon as possible.

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AARP Driver Safety Program, April 3
This course will be presented in Lincoln as a one 4-hour session on Wednesday, April 3, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road. A certified AARP instructor will teach the course. Cost is $12 for AARP members and $14 for non-members payable at the door. To register for the class, call 402-441-7180. AARP members must bring their membership card with their ID number as well as their driver’s license. Payment by check is required — cash/credit cards are not accepted, nor is cash.

Good Neighbor Award Nominations Due March 15
The Ak-Sar-Ben Good Neighbor Award began in 1943 and is co-sponsored by the Omaha World-Herald. This award pays special recognition to individuals who perform selfless, neighborly deeds during the past year. The good deeds these individuals do range in and out of their neighborhood, and the deeds that are the most important to those individuals. Nominees are nominated by others in their community, most often by the recipient of the good deed. The recipients are recognized by the Omaha World-Herald and are also awarded a commemorative certificate and pin.

In Lancaster County, these Good Neighbors are honored at the Lancaster County Super Fair Foundation and Awards Dinner in July. For an application, go to www.aksarben.org/programs/good-neighbor or call the Lancaster Event Center at 402-441-6545. Deadline is March 15.

Pioneer Farm Award Nominations Due May 1
The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben Foundation’s Pioneer Farm Family Award honors the farm families in Nebraska whose land has been owned by the same family for 100 years or more. Each honoree receives an engraved plaque and a gatepost to place on their farm. The recipient is the owner of the farm. The Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation is the sponsor and is supported by the Nebraska Association of Fair Managers. In Lancaster County, the Pioneer Farm Families are honored at the Lancaster County Super Fair Foundation and Awards Dinner in July. For an application, go to www.aksarben.org/programs/pioneer-farm or call the Lancaster Event Center at 402-441-6545. Deadline is May 1.

Lancaster County Ag Society Hall of Fame Nominations Due May 1
At the 2010 Super Fair, the Lancaster County Agricultural Society unveiled a new Ag Society Hall of Fame located at the Lancaster Event Center in the Ag Center. This wall formally recognizes those individuals who have dedicated time and effort to the Lancaster County Agricultural Society beyond the normal volunteer hours and have made significant contributions to the establishment, development, advancement, or improvement of the Lancaster County Fair. Nominations forms and more information can be requested by calling the Lancaster Event Center at 402-441-6545.

Spring Rabbit Show
Saturday, March 16, 9 a.m.
Lancaster Extension Education Center
Registations 7:30–8:30 a.m.
Tickets 3 for $1 or 20 for $5.

RAFFLE FOR MANY PRIZES!
Tickets 3 for $1 or 20 for $5. Please bring an item for raffle such as crafts, rabbit items, plants, Easter/Spring items, books, etc. Opportunity to learn and practice your showmanship!

Sponsored by Lancaster County 4-H Rabbit VIPS Committee and UNL Extension in Lancaster County

Awards will be given!
CLASIES: Fancy Rabbis, Commercial Rabbis, Pet Class, and Pee Wee Class.
REGISTRATION FEES: $2.50 per rabbit or cavy, $1 for class, $1 showmanship.
FREE CONTESTS: Rabbit Quiz & Breed Book

Opportunity to learn and practice your showmanship!

For more information, call Bob at 402-525-8263 or Marty at 402-441-7180

All rabbits must be tattooed in the left ear (available at the show 7:30–8:30 a.m.—$1 per rabbit). All rabbits must be in cans with leak-proof bottoms.

April

7 p.m.
1:30–4:30 p.m.
12:05–12:55 p.m.
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In January, more than 900 youth from 30 states, along with Alberta, Canada, traveled to Denver, Colo., to take part in the 4-H/FFA Western National Roundup. 15 Nebraska 4-H youth from Lancaster and Douglas/Sarpy Counties attended the 2012 4-H Horse Classic portion of the Roundup. Competitions in the Western National 4-H Horse Classic included hippology, horse bowl, public speaking, and individual and team demonstration. Each team and individual had to first win the state competition to qualify for nationals.

Team Nebraska (consisting of Lancaster and Douglas/Sarpy 4-H’ers) earned High Overall State Award 1st place — National Champions! This is the second year in a row 4-H youth from Lancaster and Douglas/Sarpy Counties earned High Overall State Award 1st place! The High Overall State Award is given to the state with the overall highest score based on placings in the five different competitions. Top five teams in the nation were, in order of placing: Nebraska, Mississippi, Colorado, Arizona, and Texas.

The Hippology team of Elli Dearmont, Megan Luedtke, Kate Rawlinson, and Hannah Ronnau (coached by Kendra Ronnau) earned Overall High Team — National Champions! Hippology means the study of horses. The competition included four phases: examination (written test and slide identification), stations, judging, and team problems. Hippology Overall Individuals included Megan Luedtke placing 1st, Hannah Ronnau placing 2nd, and Elli Dearmont and Kate Rawlinson tying for 4th place.

The Horse Team Demonstration of Ivy Dearmont and Lexi Wolfe (coached by Kendra Ronnau) earned High Team — National Champions with their demonstration “Tips for your Trailer Hood.”

The Horse Judging Team of Ashley Holm, Sierra Nelson, and Bailee Sobotka (coached by Roger Bell) earned 4th High Team Overall. (Vanessa Butterfield, also on the team, was unexpectedly unable to attend nationals.) Horse Judging High Overall Individuals earned Bailee Sobotka placing 2nd.

The Douglas/Sarpy Horse Bowl team of Courtney Everhart, Megan Klug, Cheyenne Overman, and Heidi Wesely (coached by Shari Parys) placed 6th; and Taylor Barnes earned High Individual in the Horse Public Speaking Contest.

The Lancaster County Hippology and Demonstration teams earned national champions in their competitions.

In January, 25 4-H Teen Council members organized and led the overnight 4-H Lock-In for 65 4th and 5th graders. This year, teens chose the theme, “Super Heroes” and divided into four groups: games, education, crafts, and snacks. At the Lock-In attendees rotated through each of the four groups, made friends, slept a little, and had lots of fun.

Teens reported on evaluations that by participating in the Lock-In:
• 91% improved their leadership skills
• 83% learned at least one new leadership skill (examples given include being patient, talking in front of everyone, explaining directions well, listening, and how to “take charge”)
• 87% feel more comfortable being in a leadership role

 Asked what benefits do they receive by being a Teen Council member at the Lock-In, teens said:
• leadership growth
• having more confidence and being self around strangers
• how to solve a situation when there’s still time left but the activities have run dry
• learning how to be a better leader in life
• respect
• learned how to work as part of a team and how to work with younger children
• since I’d like to be a teacher, it gave me an idea of different ways to lead kids
• having fun
• to make real friends

Teen Council Leader Marilyn Schepers says, “Super Heroes was the theme for the lock-in and the teens proved to be my Super Heroes. The skills they learned for organizing, execution, and accountability for the Lock-In activities were outstanding. I thoroughly enjoy observing these young people develop into responsible adults. They are wonderful role models for the younger participants.”

 Teens in the education group led youth in educational games and a discussion about real and fake super heroes.

Crafts included making masks, shields, and other super hero related items.

In the snacks group, youth frosted and decorated sugar cookies and made play dough.

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