

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Fall Armyworm Trapping Network

Scouting for fall armyworm injury isn't much fun. They don't overwinter here, migrating north each summer to lay eggs here typically sometime in July with larvae visible in late July into August. It's not a great time to be out in grasses looking for larvae feeding.

After multiple years trying to stay ahead of potential feeding pressure, a fall armyworm trapping network was initiated in Kansas last summer. Still in its infancy, it *does* provide an idea of when to at least *start* planning scouting efforts. The two traps located in the Meadowlark Extension District both confirm the arrival of fall armyworm adults - albeit in small numbers.

These adults have likely laid eggs and may result in a couple of overlapping generations through September. Damage is most likely in alfalfa, forage sorghum, and brome, often when plants are in a tender vegetative state. The regrowth of brome and alfalfa hay fields are their most likely landing spots and these stands should be inspected regularly for larvae feeding injury.

Initial injury symptoms will look like 'windowpane' injury from tiny larvae chewing off a single layer of the plant's cells but not through the entire leaf surface. Larvae can be difficult to see, often hiding around the plant's base, particularly when warm. As larvae grow, feeding increases resulting in ragged leaf edges or complete leaf stripping under high feeding pressures.

If you see 25-30 percent of plants exhibiting windowpane injury, begin scouting multiple times weekly. Larvae increase in size at an exponential rate, and so do their food requirements. Later instars (three quarters of an inch long and longer) do the most damage while being the least susceptible to insecticides. Damage will continue until larvae reach maturity.

Should we be concerned? Past history suggests we should be aware and pay attention to the near-term forecast. Adult numbers being reported do *not* suggest an 'outbreak', but monitoring is needed. We've also been fortunate locally to see decent forage growth (and regrowth on already harvested hay fields) to provide plenty foliage for them to feed on. If conditions worsen, that could change, but with any luck, there's enough 'food' over a large enough area to spread out feeding pressure.

Regular scouting will be important through the summer. Later harvested hay fields with tender regrowth will be the most attractive feeding areas. Look for spots not greening up as potential problem areas. Birds may congregate to feed on larvae and can indicate feeding pressure as well. Updated numbers will be available here if adult numbers become concerning.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Crabgrass as Forage

My first interaction with crabgrass was as a young boy pulling this grass from the garden. At that point in time it seemed like the most aggressive and annoying weed out there, but I've come to view it as a potentially excellent forage resource for livestock. Crabgrass is an annual, warm-season grass that is fast growing, easy to establish, and capable of natural and prolific reseeding, all of which allows it to excel as a "weed" but can provide feed as well.

Crabgrass was originally used in Europe as fodder before being introduced into the United States in the middle 19th century, as a forage for grazing livestock. During the past 30 years or so, there has been an enormous change in the perception of crabgrass with forage and livestock producers. It is now considered a legitimate forage crop. The Noble Research Institute released a developed cultivar for use as warm-season annual grass forage called Red River. This cultivar has become widely popular and given legitimacy to crabgrass as a forage crop. Other cultivars have been developed since.

These improved crabgrass varieties are not weeds' but high-producing, high-quality forages that are broadly adapted. The nutritive value of crabgrass is often superior to other warm-season forage options during summer for both haying and grazing. Forage crabgrass has high crude protein (8-14%) and high digestibility, which promotes average daily gains of livestock that can easily reach two pounds per head per day. It is also an excellent choice in many double-cropping systems, especially with winter annual forages like wheat, to extend the grazing period.

Crabgrass is widely adapted and can be used in both till and no-till forage production systems and is often managed in many livestock grazing operations as a reseeding crop, thereby reducing the cost of seed and other annual costs. In addition, crabgrass can also be used as a component in warm-season annual and perennial forage systems. It is particularly productive in dryland situations, but it also performs well under irrigation and across a range of soil pH levels (5 to 7.5). It can be used for silage or hay production and is an excellent choice for conservation purposes. It covers critical areas quickly due to its rapid growth and establishment.

For best results, plant crabgrass mid-spring to early summer for the best forage production. Since yield is dependent on rainfall, avoid planting after mid-summer. Seeding rates should range from 2 to 4 pounds of pure live seed per acre and planting depth should not be more than 1/2-inch deep. Adequate fertility must be provided for improved forages to be successful, and crabgrass is no exception. Always soil test and apply nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium accordingly.

Crabgrass works well when planted following small grains such as cereal rye, triticale or wheat. The small grains provide forage for late fall into spring and the crabgrass fills in during the summer and early fall to provide high-quality forage. Light tillage is recommended when the cereal forage is done being grazed or harvested in the spring. This improves seed germination and promotes better volunteer crabgrass stands for the summer.

In the summer, begin grazing crabgrass stands when plants are 4 to 6 inches tall, which typically occurs 30-40 days after seedling emergence. For hay production, cut crabgrass pastures in the boot to heading stage (normally 18 to 24 inches high), which will allow for at least two harvests per year. Regrowth is supported by remaining leaves and not by stored root and crown reserves, so avoid cutting crabgrass pastures lower than 3 inches.

If your focus is filling the forage gap in the heat of summer and early fall, you might give crabgrass a try. This is a "weed" that can provide some high-quality tonnage with relatively low cost or input. To learn more about utilizing crabgrass reference the K-State Publication "*Utilizing Crabgrass As A Forage*" found in the Forage Facts notebook series in the K-State Bookstore.

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Modify Your Hose to Cut Water Costs

This time of year, high temperatures can cause our plants to struggle. Even trees start to require more water, but more water means more costs. Kansas State horticulture expert, Cynthia Domenghini, says modifying soaker hoses can help homeowners save a few dollars.

“Soaker hoses are notorious for non-uniform watering,” Domenghini said. “In other words, you often receive too much water from one part of the hose and not enough from the other part.” Patchy water application may not affect smaller trees, as the soaker will circle the tree several times, but can affect larger trees. For more uniform watering, Domenghini suggests hooking the beginning and end of the soaker hose to a y-adapter to equalize pressure and provide more uniform watering. The parts needed are just a y-adapter and a female-to-female connector.

“It is also helpful if the y-adapter has shut-off valves so the volume of flow can be controlled,” Domenghini said. “Too high a flow rate can allow water to run off rather than soak.”

The position of the hose can also make a difference. On larger trees, Domenghini said the soaker hose can circle the trunk at least half the distance to the drip line. On smaller trees, she said the hose can circle the tree several times so only the soil that contains tree roots will be watered. To check if the watering is effective, Domenghini said the soil should be wet at least 12 inches deep. A metal rod or something similar can be used to check.

“Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet and your probe will stop when it hits dry soil,” she said. “How long it takes water to reach a 12-inch depth varies depending on the rate of water flow and soil.”

As a test when first watering the tree, record the amount of time it takes to reach a 12-inch depth of dampness. The tree can then be watered for that amount of time in subsequent watering.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

How Assistive Technology Can Help

Assistive technology is any tool or technology that helps a person complete a functional task easier and more efficiently. It allows people with disabilities and older adults, but many of us use it every day and don't even think about it. If you wear glasses or use a step stool, you have used assistive technology. Assistive technology can improve life for everyone, but it will be especially valuable to those with disabilities, mental health conditions, those recovering from injury, illness, or surgery, and older people. Assistive technology promotes a healthy, productive, and independent lifestyle by using devices to help people be more independent and safer.

Thousands of assistive technology devices can be bought or made at home. The hard part is knowing where to start. When trying to decide, consider the following points.

- What are the biggest challenges I face daily or multiple times a week? What tasks are challenging?
- What experts can help me decide what is best? A good first step is to talk with an expert who can assess your situation. This could include your primary care provider, a physical therapist, an audiologist, or a specialized healthcare provider.
- Do I know others who use an assistive device that could be helpful to me? What products do they use that could be helpful to me?
- Can I try out the device before I decide to buy it?
- Will this device address my needs?

You can often find the items you need at a medical supply store, a pharmacy, or an online retailer. Some organizations provide lending programs for free or at a low cost. Some items, such as wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, and canes, should be adjusted to meet an individual's height and stature. Also, make sure you know how to use your assistive device correctly. Ask for professional help if you need clarification.

You may pay out of pocket for some devices. If you have private insurance, Medicare, VA benefits, a Health Savings Account (HSA), or a Flexible Spending Account (FSA), you may cover the cost of the item. Other organizations can help procure items.

- Assistive Technology for Kansans: Provides information, device demonstration, and training and helps find public and private funds for equipment. They are available at 1-800-526-3648 or <http://www.atk.ku.edu>.
- The Kansas Equipment Exchange Reuse Program allows eligible Kansans to get quality refurbished medical equipment for free or at a low cost. Visit <https://atk.ku.edu/get-refurbished-device> or call 620-421-8367.
- The National AgrAbility Project provides resources for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with various disabilities. Visit www.agrability.org or call 1-800-825-4264.

For more information about assistive technology, contact Teresa Hatfield at the Meadowlark Extension District at thatfield@ksu.edu or 785-364-4125.

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Cindy Williams
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No news article this week