

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

Tar Spot Confirmed in NEK

The first map tracking Tar Spot in corn is out – and the growing season has begun with Northeast Kansas as the first confirmation of the year. K-State Research & Extension Row Crops Pathologist Dr. Rodrigo Onofre confirmed this troublesome disease last week in corn fields in Doniphan and Atchison Counties, almost three to four weeks *earlier* than in 2023.

While earlier than we'd like to see it, it's not completely unexpected. The Corn Belt area affected by Tar Spot has been increasing since 2018 (<https://corn.ipmPIPE.org/tarspot/historical-end-of-season-maps/>) and in Kansas since confirmation in 2022. We now have established pathogen sources in corn residue across much of the northeast part of the state allowing this disease to get a start as soon as conditions allow.

What exactly are those conditions? Temperatures in the 60–75 degree range are optimum, but last summer showed it can withstand higher temperature thresholds as well. A big part of the issue is hours of leaf wetness, with this pathogen preferring greater than seven hours. Even when we see a lack of measurable moisture, heavy dew can contribute to Tar Spot development.

While treatment may be warranted as the season progresses, scouting is the best management right now. Every field will be different. Hybrid susceptibility and previous crop management both affect pressure. In the wise words of University of Wisconsin Field Crops Pathologist Damon Smith: *Resist the temptation of spraying before V10! Margins are tight and multiple apps are generally not needed. Keep the fungicide option if/when you need it making informed decisions through scouting and/or apps.* Confirmed levels have been low. Unless scouting dictates, fungicide applications are not yet warranted. Be aware of disease presence and scout fields accordingly, planning ahead for fungicide applications if needed.

If a fungicide application is needed, excellent products are available. You can compare efficacy on specific diseases in a reference entitled *Fungicide Efficacy for Control of Corn Foliar Diseases* that includes product ratings from Plant Pathologists across the country. It is available in District Offices or by request via e-mail to dhallaue@ksu.edu. Access it online at: <https://cropprotectionnetwork.s3.amazonaws.com/corn-foliar-efficacy-2024-1709214762.pdf>. Four years of data from Darcy Telenko (Purdue) and others show definite efficacy differences among products as well as when comparing single versus multiple mode of action products.

Tar Spot can be a challenging pathogen and while this early season confirmation doesn't mean we will *have* to do something, it increases the need for vigilant scouting to stay ahead of its development. For more information, don't hesitate to drop me a line. An article in last week's KSU Agronomy eUpdate by Dr. Onofre is a great read as well. You can request a copy as referenced above or online at <https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/>.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Summer Solstice

Why in world would I choose to write about the longest daylight day of the year? This might be an important day for those growing plants counting growing degree days, or for those looking for more time when working outside in the evenings or for many different reasons to different people. My purpose today revolves around folks like myself who keep a poultry flock. June 20/21 is an important date on the hen's internal calendar, so let's take a look at why.

Last week Dr. Scott Beyer, K-State Research and Extension Poultry Specialist, joined a group of interested poultry producers at a meeting in Topeka to discuss photoperiod, molting and many other poultry production topics. Dr. Beyer's discussion of artificial lighting and molting, as they relate to egg production, seems a timely topic to share today as we approach summer solstice.

Pullets will begin to lay eggs around 6 months of age and can lay eggs for upwards of five to ten years, if well cared for. The first two years will be the most productive however. While laying hens can be productive for several years or cycles, they do need time to rest, reset and restart between laying cycles. To accomplish this rest, they go through a period of molt, where feathers are lost and replaced and when egg laying slows or completely stops. This is a natural process, most often seen in late fall.

Hens need 12 to 14 hours of light to maximize egg laying capacity. Since the longest day of the year (June 20/21) is around 15 hours, using artificial light sources for 15 to 16 hours a day, sets the hens "clock" for egg laying. This can be established with a relatively small amount of light from an artificial light source and a timer. In a previous article, this process was discussed, so what I'd like to focus on today is the need for molting and when to best accomplish this for a flock that has had a least one cycle and the 16 hours of artificial light provided.

Egg quality declines slightly with each egg laid by the hen. Summer heat and humidity doesn't help egg quality either, so working to slow egg production and stimulate molt in late summer is not a bad plan. If hens have been exposed to artificial light the easiest thing to do is "pull the plug" on the timer on June 21. Be aware of all artificial light sources, as barn/yard lights can create enough light to interrupt the needed complete dark period. The days will naturally become shorter and egg production will gradually fall off and the hens will eventually enter a molt. By the time early fall approaches and the hens begin laying again, plug that timer back in and look for higher quality eggs to start rolling in again all fall, winter and spring long.

Lighting is of course just one aspect to keep in mind. Hens need to be on a good, complete layer feed, have appropriate shelter, clean/fresh water and be free of parasites and disease. The summer molt period is one time of the year where you can move hens to a lower quality feed, like scratch grains (with vitamins and minerals added) as their nutritional requirements decrease when they stop laying. This molt period may also be a good time to assess which chickens may need to be culled for defects or production issues.

Chickens really are a relatively low maintenance animal to keep and supply the family with a high-quality protein source in the egg. There is a wealth of information on the web about backyard poultry, but I'd always point you to researched based work from Universities as the best reliable source. To learn more, visit the K-State Bookstore and search for poultry publications or Dr. Beyer's poultry Q&A page at:

<https://www.asi.k-state.edu/extension/poultry/frequently-asked-questions/>

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Winter damage to trees

Do you have tree branches, or even entire trees, that have failed to branch out? You are not alone! Our January cold snap caused some significant damage to some trees.

Winter damage happens mainly as a result of extreme temperature. Trees can acclimate to warmer weather, and when it is followed by a quick drop in temperature, the trees might not be ready. In early January we saw warm temperatures reaching 30 and even 40 degrees F. Then, mid-January saw a quick shift, with negative-degree weather for multiple days in a row.

Because our deciduous trees do not have leaves on them in the winter, we don't know that this winter damage has occurred until they fail to leaf out in the spring. Some trees that suffered winter damage may fail to leaf out entirely. Other times only parts of the tree are damaged. Unfortunately, there's not anything you can do to bring back these branches after they've suffered winter damage. The best course of action is to prune those branches or in severe cases remove the tree.

Interestingly Evergreens, since they retain green foliage throughout the winter, can be more vulnerable. The dry winds that often accompany cold winters pull moisture out of their foliage. If the ground is frozen, the roots are not able to take up water to replace that lost moisture, causing foliage to die back. The first step in preventing this issue is selecting trees that can withstand our average weather. But even trees adapted to our climate can still suffer winter damage in certain situations.

While there is not much we can do in the winter, we can help set our trees up for success in the fall by ensuring they have plenty of water. For trees under 3 years old, aim for two inches of water per week in November. Trees older than 3 years, aim for one inch of water per week. This can be from irrigation or rainfall. Continue watering until the ground freezes.

When watering trees it's best to water slowly and deeply. Using a soaker hose is one of the best ways to do this. You don't want to water only at the base of the tree, but make sure you spread your soaker hose out underneath where the branches reach.

If you are concerned about your tree or unsure if your tree has winter damage, reach out to our office for more guidance!

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month

Elder abuse is a continuing and often underreported problem, and unfortunately, it can happen to any older adult. Elder abuse is the intentional act, or failure to act, that causes or is likely to cause harm to an older adult. There are six categories of elder abuse: physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, neglect, abandonment, and financial/exploitation.

People who commit elder abuse include children, family members, as well as staff at long-term care facilities. Sixty percent of elder abuse is committed by family members, with two-thirds being spouses or adult children. Abused older adults are 300% more likely to die than those who have not experienced abuse.

Look for the following signs of abuse.

- Physical: Bruises (particularly those shaped like objects or fingers, or different colors), welts, pressure marks, unexplained broken bones, the use of restraints, improper use of medications, untreated bedsores, cuts, or burns.
- Emotional or Psychological: Withdrawal from everyday activities, depression, unusual nervous or fearful behavior, frequent arguments, unwillingness to speak openly in the presence of caregivers or others, and changes in sleep patterns.
- Sexual: Bruising or unexplained bleeding near the genitalia, unexplained sexually transmitted infections (STIs), torn or stained underwear, or unexplained depression.
- Neglect: Unexplained or extreme weight loss, poor hygiene, malnutrition or dehydration, unsanitary or unsafe living conditions, untreated medical issues, breakdown of the skin, or lack of needed medical aids (walker, hearing aids, or glasses).
- Abandonment: is seeing the absence of a caregiver, frailty, malnourishment or dehydration, poor hygiene, or unexplained depression or loneliness.
- Financial/Exploitation: seeing sudden changes in their financial situation, late or unpaid bills, unusual purchases, withdrawals, or transfers, suspicious changes in bank accounts, wills, or powers of attorney, lack of knowledge of financial status, new “best friends,” documents signed under duress, unexplained disappearance of valuables or money, or anxiety about personal finances.

Warning signs can be different for everyone. If you notice changes in personality, behavior, or health, report them. It is estimated that for every reported case of elder abuse, at least 23 go unreported. If you suspect someone is being abused, neglected, or exploited, contact the proper agency or law enforcement official. You do not have to provide proof of abuse if you are concerned.

- If you suspect someone is in immediate danger, call **911**.
- If you suspect domestic or community abuse, contact Adult Protective Services at 1800-922-5330.
- If you suspect abuse in a nursing home, hospital, home health agency, or similar setting, contact the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services at 1-800-842-0078.
- If the suspected abuse is occurring outside the state of Kansas, contact the state’s Adult Protective Services agency. The Eldercare Locator, 1-800-677-1116, can help you find the appropriate agency.

Resources: KSRE Publication: Elder Abuse and Neglect: What You Should Know.

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent, Food, Nutrition, Health and Safety

Tiny Habits

In addition to carving out time for physical activity, including moderate intensity (walking, biking, etc.) and strengthening exercises, it is also important to just move more and sit less throughout your day. This is where “tiny habits” can have great impact. When established, these tiny habits are easy to accomplish because they happen “automatically” and don’t require much thought or planning. They are small bits of movement, integrated into your day, that have become habits.

This Tiny Habits approach, developed by BJ Fogg, Director of the Behavior Design Lab at Stanford University (<https://tinyhabits.com/>), can be summed up like this: If you want to create a new habit, plan to do it RIGHT AFTER an existing habit that you already do reliably. Here are steps to help you create tiny habits that work for you:

1. Think about tasks that you do consistently throughout a typical day. Perhaps you can relate to one of these---sending emails and brushing your teeth.
2. Now, think about a small behavior (related to sitting less or moving more) that you would like to do more consistently. Some examples: stand up and stretch more often; improve your balance.
3. Finally, create your tiny habit; after I hit send on an email, I will stand up and stretch; while I brush my teeth, I will stand on one foot/leg to improve my balance.

Tiny habits, like these, work because you’re sequencing a new habit with something you already do reliably, building it into your typical routine without disruption. You can also think about adding and connecting activity, or other healthful behaviors, to other things you do consistently, such as:

- Park further away from your destination.
- Stand up and walk around while talking on the phone and during TV commercials.
- Lift light weights while on a Zoom call (with the camera off).
- Set an alarm to prompt you to get up and move a little every hour.
- Walk the stairs whenever possible, instead of taking an elevator.
- When eating out (and at home) have water with your meal instead of ordering a beverage.
- Keep a bowl of fruit on your desk or kitchen counter so it is ready for a quick snack.

What are some ways you can create tiny habits to increase physical activity and make healthier choices? How can you connect these with things you already do throughout your day?