

Purdue Extension

Greene County Agriculture & Natural Resources Newsletter

May is Beef Month in Indiana

In addition to planting season, spring cleaning and all the events at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the month of May is also Beef Month in Indiana. Begun some 45 years ago, Beef Month is a time to celebrate the community of farmers and ranchers who work hard every day to raise the safe and nutritious beef that is enjoyed by consumers around the world.

Beef is good — and good for Indiana’s economy. From cattle producers to feed and equipment dealers and food marketers, thousands of people play a role in bringing beef from pasture to plate.

It is no coincidence that Beef Month occurs at the beginning of the summer grilling season.

“The start of the grilling season is a perfect time to recognize the beef industry,” said Joe Moore, Executive Vice President of the Indiana Beef Cattle Association. “We are fortunate in Indiana to have such outstanding beef producers and allied industry partners who work together to provide the safest and highest quality beef products available anywhere for the consumer.”

Source: Indiana Beef Cattle Association



Purdue Extension Flood Resources Available for Homeowners & Farmers

With persistent, often heavy rainfall triggering flood alerts throughout Indiana during the last week of April and first week of May, many Hoosiers were concerned about possible damage to homes and newly planted grain crops.

In response, Purdue University’s Extension Disaster Education Network has compiled a list of online resources that could help Indiana homeowners and farmers coping with the storms’ aftermath.

The Flood Resources page, available at <https://ag.purdue.edu/extension/eden/Pages/flood-info.aspx>, provides links to informational materials from a number of agencies, including Purdue Extension, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Indiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Indiana Board of Animal Health, said Abby Hostetler, Extension disaster specialist.

“No one expects to be affected by a disaster, but disasters can affect anyone,” Hostetler said. “Purdue Extension resources can help homeowners guard against flooding and educate themselves on the proper steps to recovery in the event their home is affected by flood waters.”

During the floods of 2015, EDEN produced a website with additional resources for homeowners and farmers. The site is available at <https://ag.purdue.edu/extension/eden/floods/Pages/default.aspx> and covers topics ranging from cleaning up flooded basements to managing crops in unusually wet conditions.

The heavy rainfall in recent weeks has led to school closings and advisories for motorists to avoid high standing water in roadways.

Ken Scheeringa, associate state climatologist based at Purdue, said he had seen daily rainfall totals of more than 8 inches in Dubois and Pike counties and two-week totals of nearly 13 inches in Pike and Posey counties. The average monthly precipitation for April in southwest Indiana generally is 3.90 inches.

“The rainfall has been torrential in spots,” Scheeringa said.

Source: Darrin Pack, Purdue University

Important Upcoming Dates

Pond Management Session

Wed., May 31; 6-8PM
4600 Steubenville Road, Freedom, IN
\$5/Family
RSVP by May 25 to 812-829-5020

Grazing 102

Fri.-Sat., June 23-24
Southern Indiana Purdue Ag Center,
Dubois, Indiana
\$50
Register by June 15

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Producers Invited to Grazing 102 Course

Producers can get first-hand tips from experts on how to incorporate management-intensive grazing techniques during a two-day seminar hosted by Purdue Extension. Grazing 102, which will take place June 23-24, will cover numerous topics on best management practices, including plant growth and development, soil fertility, forage identification, fencing and watering systems.

Grazing 102, a course which is designed to help producers successfully run their own operations, will be held at the Southern Indiana Purdue Ag Center, 11371 East Purdue Farm Road, located near Dubois, Ind. The program is 1-6 p.m. (EDT) June 23, and 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (EDT) June 24. The fee is \$50, which covers materials, management tools and refreshments.

"This is geared toward producers wanting to improve their management methods. Anyone can come, especially those who have no experience or are just getting started," said Jason Tower, superintendent of the Southern Indiana-Purdue Ag Center.

Grazing 102, which is held every other year, will give attendees the opportunity to look at many different forages that might be used in a grazing system, said Keith Johnson, Extension forage specialist and agronomy professor at Purdue University. "We'll discuss rotational grazing as well as how to implement fencing and water components, which is one of the highlights of the program."

The event also will include pasture walks and field tours to provide more hands-on opportunities.

"We'll go out in the field and identify forage and weeds," Tower said. "We'll also get to see some livestock moved, just to demonstrate rotational grazing."

Rotational grazing is one of the management strategies that Johnson and Tower would like more livestock farmers to implement.

"It's critically important to have forages in a pasture that yield well and have the quality necessary for the particular type of livestock being fed," Johnson said. "Producers also need to understand that the proper stocking rate is critical to avoid overgrazing that can cause deterioration of a pasture very quickly."

Grazing 102 provides an invaluable opportunity to have direct contact with expert speakers and their peers. "Small groups are typically better," Tower said. "This keeps up good interaction between speakers and attendees."

Registration forms are due by June 15. The event will be held rain or shine. Additional individuals from the same operation are permitted at a cost of \$25, but materials and management tools will not be included.

Make checks payable to the Purdue CES Education Fund, Purdue Extension, Dubois County, 1482 Executive Blvd., Jasper, Ind. 47546. The event will be held rain or shine.

For more information, contact Jason Tower at towerj@purdue.edu or at 812-678-4427.

Sour Mulch Can Burn Tender Plants

Although the benefits of mulching garden plants are many, wood mulch that has been improperly stockpiled can lead to plant injury or even death. Young herbaceous plants are the most susceptible to such injury, which becomes obvious shortly after applying a hardwood bark mulch. Plants may look like they have been burned with fertilizer or pesticides, or possibly, are under severe water stress. All of the above could potentially be a problem, but apparently, we must now add "sour mulch" to the list of suspects.

When hardwood bark mulch is stacked in tall piles and allowed to stand for long periods, the material in the center of the pile begins to compost anaerobically (without air) and may sour. The term "sour" refers to the extreme acidity that occurs under such conditions (reported to be pH of 1.8-3.6, while that of "normal" mulch is generally close to 7.0). Some reports indicate that pine bark does not sour.

The mulch tends to heat as it breaks down, and steam may be seen escaping from the pile when it is finally disturbed. This heat can directly injure plants, if the mulch is not allowed to cool first. However, the more serious problem is that anaerobic composting of hardwood leads to the production of several plant-damaging components; methane, alcohol, ammonia and hydrogen sulfide are possibilities.

Injury to young, tender plants is swift, usually within one day of applying mulch. Symptoms include yellowing or blackening of foliage and leaf drop. Depending on the extent of the injury, plants often are able to recover. Thorough watering, especially during hot, dry weather, will help prevent further stress. Do not apply fertilizer to plants injured by sour mulch; such materials can cause further injury. However, if plants recover yet seem to be lacking in vigor, a side dressing of nitrogen may be helpful in mid-summer if weather conditions warrant. Avoid fertilizing during hot, dry weather.

The best course of action is to prevent sour mulch injury in the first place. Stockpiles should be no higher than 4 feet, if possible; if it's necessary to stack taller, turn them periodically to allow some aeration. Alternatively, sour mulch can be made fit for use by spreading in shallow layers and allowing it to air out for a few days, preferably a week, before using around young, tender plants. If no rainfall has occurred, watering the mulch also may help wash away toxic accumulations.

Source: B. Rosie Lerner, Purdue Consumer Horticulture Specialist



June Yard & Garden Calendar

HOME (Houseplants and indoor activities)

- Indoor plants will require more frequent watering and fertilization as they increase their summer growth.
- Houseplants can be moved outdoors to a shady location, but pay close attention to their watering needs.
- Cut garden flowers for indoor beauty. Recut the stems again just before placing in water. Add a floral preservative, and change the solution frequently.
- Root cuttings of houseplants and garden plants to increase your collection or share with a friend.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs after blooms fade.
- Apply fungicide to prevent and control black spot on roses.
- Water newly planted trees and shrubs. Water deeply every seven to 10 days when rain is lacking.
- Propagate deciduous shrubs, such as forsythia, lilac, pyracantha and weigela, by stem tip cuttings.
- Remove faded flowers and seed pods on lilac and other spring-flowering shrubs.
- Many fruit trees had few to no flowers this year thanks to the brutal winter, but some apples and pears may still have fruit set. If they have much of a crop, don't be alarmed at June drop of some fruit. It is a natural thinning process for most trees to prevent excessive loads, though might not be as much to thin this year. Thin remaining fruit, if necessary, or prop up heavy branches to avoid breakage. Most fruit should be spaced 6 to 8 inches apart on a branch.

GARDEN (Vegetables, small fruits and flowers)

- Start seeds of cabbage, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower for fall garden transplants.
- Plan now for your Halloween pumpkin. Determine the days to harvest for the particular cultivar you want to plant (usually on the seed packet), and count backward to determine the proper planting date.
- Harvest spring plantings of broccoli, cabbage and peas.
- Remove cool-season plants, such as radish, spinach and lettuce, as they bolt, or form seed stalks, during hot summer weather.
- Continue planting carrots, beans and sweet corn for successive harvests.
- For staked tomatoes, remove suckers (branches that form where the leaf joins the stem) while they are 1 to 1.5 inches long to allow easier training.
- Pinch shoot tips of chrysanthemums, impatiens, petunias and coleus to promote bushier growth.
- Remove tops of spring-flowering bulbs only after they have yellowed and withered.
- Protect ripening strawberries from birds by covering with netting.
- Supplement natural rainfall as needed to supply a total of 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week to the garden.

Source: B. Rosie Lerner, Purdue Consumer Horticulture Specialist

Follow These Tips for a Safer Planting Season

With planting season underway throughout Indiana, a Purdue Extension agricultural safety and health specialist is urging motorists and farmers alike to use caution when travelling on rural roadways.

"There is a shared responsibility for making sure our roadways remain safe," said Bill Field, professor of agricultural and biological engineering. "There are certain times of year when farm vehicles will be more prevalent, such as spring planting and fall harvest, and motorists need to recognize that and exercise patience."

Field said modern farm vehicles have more safety equipment than previous models, including better lighting, but the individual vehicles are much larger and pose a greater danger in a collision. Tractors, planters, sprayers and other farm equipment can be two to three times the height of passenger vehicles, weigh up to 40,000 pounds, and take up more than a lane of a traffic.

"What appears to be happening is that we are seeing more severe injuries to motorists who run into vehicles much larger than their own," Field said. "For many drivers, speed is of the essence, and that is not a good match for these slower-moving farm vehicles."

Farm vehicles typically travel at 20-25 mph, about half the speed of passenger vehicles on state and county highways. Slamming on the brakes to avoid a slow-moving farm vehicle could cause a chain-reaction collision.

Although there are fewer farm vehicles on the road than in previous years, farmers are now traveling greater distances between fields, meaning their vehicles are on the road for longer periods, Field said.

"Farmers need to take a look at where their fields are located and maybe think about better ways to transport their equipment, including the use of trailers and escort vehicles," he said.

Farmers should also be aware that changing legal standards mean they could be held liable for traffic accidents involving their vehicles, with potentially devastating financial implications, Field said.

"Thirty years ago, it was rare to see farmers sued for accidents, but these days there is a greater expectation that farmers have greater responsibility and could be at fault," he said.

Field offers tips to keep both motorists and farmers safer on the road throughout the growing season.

For motorists:

* Be aware - Watch for roadway obstructions like slow-moving farm vehicles and avoid distracted driving behaviors, such as texting.

* Slow down - Especially when passing through agricultural areas.

* Keep your distance - drivers should allow at least 3 seconds' distance from any vehicle they are following.

* Pass with care - Pass only on straightaways with good visibility, and make sure the farm vehicle is not swinging wide to make a left turn.

* Be patient - In heavy traffic conditions, farmers are expected to pull over and let other vehicles pass but only if conditions are safe to do so.

For farmers:

* Don't park trucks on side of a main road while loading grain.

* Make sure all farm vehicles are clearly marked with "slow vehicle" signage.

* Make sure all vehicle lights are operating.

* Consider using escort vehicles and trailers to transport farm equipment over longer distances.

Source: Darrin Pack, Purdue University

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www.extension.purdue.edu/greene

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Sadie Davis

Purdue Extension Greene County
Ag & Natural Resource Extension Educator

4503 W State Road 54

Bloomfield, IN 47424

davis186@purdue.edu

Office: 812-659-2122

Fax: 812-659-9155

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Greene County Office

4503 W State Road 54

Bloomfield, IN 47424