CARTER COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES NEWSLETTER

March 2025

Cooperative Extension Service
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Highlights:

⇒ If you want to accept Senior, WIC, or Double Dollar vouchers this year at the Farmer's Market you will need to attend the March 31st training. Details inside.

⇒ Meeting season is in full force. Check out all the great upcoming programs.

Enjoy your newsletter,

Rebecca Konopka

Rebecca Konopka,
Carter County Extension
Agent for Agriculture
& Natural Resources
Education

Upcoming Events

Denotes events where preregistration is required. Call 474-6686 or email Rebecca.k@uky.edu to register.

More details available at https://carter.ca.uky.edu/anr.

Little Sandy Beekeepers Association
Tue, Mar 4, 6:30 pm — Carter County Extension Office

Beef Quality & Care Assurance (BQCA) Training
Fri, Mar 7, 10 :00- 11:45am — Carter County Extension Office

Private Pesticide Applicator Training
Mon, Mar 10, 5:30 - 8:30pm — Carter County Extension Office

County Extension Council & District Board Meetings
Tue, Mar 11, 3:00pm — Carter County Extension Office

Beef Palpation Clinic
Fri, Mar 14, 10:00am - 3:00pm — Carter County Extension Office

Backyard Apple & Pear Care
Mon, Mar 17, 6:00pm — Carter County Extension Office

Hike & Learn
Fri, Mar 21, 1:00 pm — Carter Caves State Resort Park

Northeast Area Livestock Association Meeting
Tue, Mar 25, 6 :00 pm — Carter County Extension Office
Topic: 2025 Eastern Kentucky Hay Contest…Developing a Strategy to Win!

Starting Seeds
Fri, Mar 28, 11:30am — Carter County Extension Office

Farmer's Market Vendor Training & Meeting
Mon, Mar 31, 6:00 pm — Carter County Extension Office

Little Sandy Beekeepers Association
Tue, Apr 1 , 6:30 pm — Carter County Extension Office
Topic: The Enigmatic Asian Honey Bees

Sprayer Clinic
Tue, Apr 8, 6:00 pm — Boyd County Expo Building (Fairgrounds)

Ag Advancement Council
Mon, Apr 14, 6:00pm — Carter County Extension Office

Ag Development Board
Thu, Apr 17, 7:00pm — Carter County Extension Office

Eden Shale Farm Tour
Fri, Apr 25, 10:30am — Eden Shale Farm

New Publication! Insuring Horticultural Investments: Insurance Checklist

Casey Byrd, Extension Associate, Horticulture

Winter is often a time of reflection and preparation for the upcoming growing season. With the increase in intense storms, it's also a great time to review your insurance coverages and fine tune your farm's weather-related emergency plan. This article provides relevant information on insurance programs and presents possible climate concerns that you should consider when reviewing your policy. There is also a checklist that serves as an example for reviewing your operation's specific coverage needs- you can even make a custom annual checklist for your business! Call the Extension Office to request a copy of the publication or view it online at https://tinyurl.com/hortinsurance.

Backyard Apple & Pear Care

March 17 @ 6 PM

Carter County Extension Office

$40 (Includes 2 apple or pear trees)
Must attend session to receive trees.

Space is limited. Register by scanning the QR code or calling 474-6686.

Hike & Learn

Escape the Ordinary and Embrace the Extraordinary

Join us on a journey where the trails whisper tales and every step is an adventure waiting to unfold. We invites you to explore the great outdoors with our Hike and Learn program.
Please wear closed-toe shoes and bring your own snacks & drinks.
Hikes cancelled due to inclement weather will not be rescheduled.

CARTER CAVES
March 21 @ 1:00 PM

Guided Horn Hollow Cave Tour
1.5 mile hike + 30 min cave tour
Meet at the Welcome Center.

CARTER CAVES
April 21 @ 1:00 PM

Stream Stomp
3/4 mile Natural Bridge Trail plus an exploration of local aquatic insects

MENIFEE COUNTY
May 16 @ 10:00 AM

Devils Market House Arch Trail
2.2 miles
Preregister & meet at the Carter County Extension Office at 8:00 to ride in the van.

For More Details:

(606)474-6686

https://carter.ca.uky.edu/anr
Facebook. @CarterCoKYAg

Lunch & Learn

Starting Seeds

Join us for a quick lunch, learn some basic garden tips, and start some seeds for your garden!

Carter County Extension Office

Friday, March 28 @ 11:30 AM

Preregister by calling (606)474-6686

For more info - https://carter.ca.uky.edu/anr

April 8th, 2025

6pm - 8pm

Franks Building
1758 Addington Road
Ashland, KY 41102

THOSE IN NEED OF PRIVATE APPLICATOR LICENSE SHOULD ARRIVE AT 5pm

*****CAIP ELIGIBLE*****

Boyd	(606) 739-5184	Meredith Hall
Carter	(606) 474-6686	Rebecca Konopka
Elliott	(606) 738-6400	Jacob Ison
Greenup	(606) 836-0201	Linda Hieneman
Lawrence	(606) 673-9495	Lane Hall

BEEF MANAGEMENT WEBINAR SERIES

If you are interested and would like to be registered send an email to dbullock@uky.edu with Beef Webinar Series in the Subject and your name and county in the message to receive a Zoom link and password. You will receive an invitation and password the morning of the presentation.

March 11

Preparing for a Successful Spring Breeding Season

Dr. Les Anderson, Extension Professor, University of Kentucky

FROM THE WOODS TODAY

www.FromThe WoodsToday.com

Every Wednesday @ 11:00 AM

March 5 —Timber Trespass & Prevention

March 12—Extreme Weather Fluctuation & Our Wildlife

April 23—Tree Planting Techniques

Pesticide Stewardship and Safety

Agriculture Application Focus

Read labels and follow all instructions

Only allow persons over 18 years to use and apply pesticides

Follow all requirements with respect to Worker Protection Standards (WPS)

Calibrate equipment annually to ensure proper dosages

Use all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) specified on labels of products used

Keep others out of Application Exclusion Zone (AEZ) during applications

Keep everyone out of treated area during Restricted Entry Intervals (REI)

Have cleanup and eye wash supplies available during mixing and application

Observe Pre Harvest Intervals (PHI) when using pesticides on edible foods

List emergency services information and post application information in central area for 30 days after expiration of REI

Maintain records of all pesticide applications for 3 years

Store pesticides only in a secure (locked) area with proper signage

Act quickly with pesticide spills. Follow the 3 C's: Control, Contain, Cleanup.

Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

February Cattle on Feed

From Southern Ag Today 2.25.25 By: Josh Maples, Mississippi State University Extension, Associate Professor, Livestock , Production Economics, Commodity Marketing

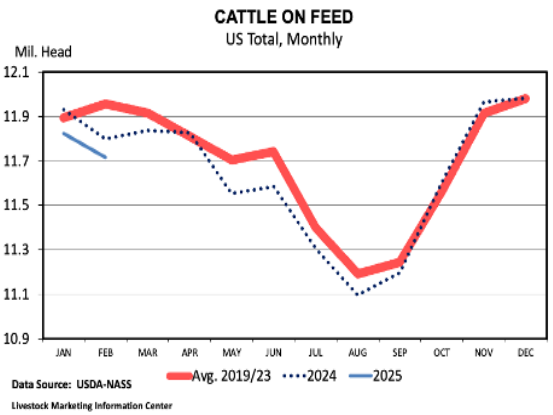
The February Cattle on Feed report was released this past Friday afternoon and reported 11.7 million head of cattle in feedlots on February 1st. This was a 0.7 percent decrease from February 1, 2024. Marketings were up 1.4 percent year-over-year. There were no big surprises in the report relative to pre-report expectations, but there were some interesting points in the report.

Placements of cattle into feedlots during January were up 1.7 percent above January 2024. Weather and winter storms delayed January 2024 placements, so the increase shown for 2025 is partially driven by a lower 2024 number. In 2024, placements were higher in February than they were in January which was the first time that had occurred since 1996. We have not seen those same challenges so far in 2025, but February placements are likely to be impacted by the lingering impacts of the Mexico cattle import ban.

A regional look at the data implies an impact of the Mexico import ban on January placements. January 2025 placements of cattle into feedlots in Texas were 50,000 head lower than a year ago which is a 14.5 percent decrease. This was offset by a 60,000 head (15.4 percent) increase in Kansas and a 30,000 head (5.9 percent) increase in Nebraska during January.

The largest increase in placements was in the 700-799 pound weight range which were up 30,000 head (6.3 percent) from a year ago. Placements were up across all weight classes in Nebraska and Kansas and lower across all weight classes in Texas. Placements of cattle into Texas feedlots weighing less than 699 pounds were down 35,000 head during January compared to a year ago.

The data mentioned above comes from feedlots with at least 1,000 head capacity. However, another interesting part of the February report is the detail about the distribution of cattle across feedlot sizes. There are 2,105 feedlots with at least 1,000 head feeding capacity. These feedlots



housed 83 percent of cattle on feed as of January 1, 2025. The remaining 17 percent of cattle on feed were located across the 24,000 feedlots with a capacity of less than 1,000 head. Of the 1,000+ capacity feedlots, there were 80 that have a capacity of 50,000 head or more, and these were home to 35 percent of the total U.S. cattle on feed on January 1.

Plant with a Plan! What to Think About Before You Plant

Camille Stevens, Extension Associate, CCD

Have you ever thought, "I should really take into consideration some important factors before I start planting." If not, do we have the resources for you!

The CCD has all sorts of recording trainings, webinars, and publications. Among those are our general webinars where we have those dedicated to What to Think About Before You Plant. We have information dedicated to the market you are considering being involved in. Direct markets or large and commercial, we've got those things that you need to think about!

Some ways we like to use this resource:

Looking to see what markets are seeing future growth and deciding if that is one I want to be involved in.

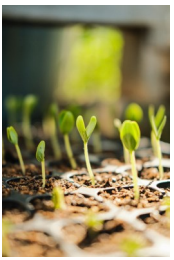
Demand for local foods has grown across all market types making entry into those markets more desirable to producers.

Thinking about how I'll market my product once it's grown/made. KDA has a few different programs that help you with your marketing mix.

We also have our crop profiles that give in-depth information on what all it takes to grow specific crops in Kentucky.

Creating a crop budget that will help estimate your break-even costs and plan for profits.

Using these resources you might be able to maximize your yield as well as potentially minimize financial and environmental risks. As a producer, these resources can help you make informed decisions about what factors will go into maintaining some of the crops I currently have or implementing new ones.



View and download What To Think About Before You Plant at https://tinyurl.com/beforeyouplant.

Follow the Basics to Maintain Yields and Manage Costs

Dr. Edwin Ritchey & Dr. John Grove, University of Kentucky

An economist was overheard saying that there were 5 ways to increase profits in any production system: cut costs, cut costs, cut costs, cut costs, and increase yields. This was somewhat a joke but has a solid underlying basis. Let's delve a little deeper into this strategy with some specific examples and practices to follow.

Yields are influenced by soil and weather conditions, soil pH and nutrient fertility status, and by pests (insects, diseases and weeds). The number one yield limiting factor for most Kentucky row crop producers is water, either too much or not enough. Water management is more of a long-term production decision regarding installation of irrigation and/or drainage systems that we will leave to the engineers.

Controlling insect, disease and weed pests is another management practice that can have a huge impact on final yield and profitability for any given year. For now, we will also assume producers are using good pest management strategies and following IPM practices/thresholds to make spray decisions.

As soil scientists, we'd like to discuss soil pH and nutrient availability. Both of these concerns can be addressed by proper soil sampling and testing. A standard soil probe is capable of making (or saving) a producer many dollars per acre when used correctly. A properly collected soil sample will provide a producer, or their consultant, with the current fertility status of the sampled fields. Knowing this for a field is paramount to knowing the right amount of lime, phosphorus, or potassium to add to that field, if any is actually needed. Remember that there are two ways to lose money in your soil fertility program; adding something you don't need (wasted input costs) or not adding something that you do need (reduced yield due to poor soil fertility). Soil sampling and testing can help avoid both of these perils as you manage your soil fertility program.

A good soil sampling and testing routine should be the basis of any soil fertility program. The first step is to properly identify the area of interest, typically no more than 10 to 20 acres in size (depending on field uniformity), sampling to 4 inches in no-till fields and 6 inches in tilled fields, and

making sure to avoid anomalies within that area that might greatly affect test results. Submit the samples to a lab with a good reputation that uses soil test procedures appropriate for soils of the of the area/region. Soil extractants are developed to provide an estimate/index of nutrient availability for crop use in the coming growing season. These extractants can vary with region as native soil conditions can vary considerably (e.g. acid, alkaline, saline, etc.). In Kentucky, we are best served by using the Mehlich 3 extractant that was developed for acid to neutral soils in the southeastern U.S.. There may be several soil test labs in the area that use the same extractant but be aware that they might report results differently. The two most common reporting methods are lb nutrient/acre or ppm nutrient in the sample. The conversion between the two is simple, multiply ppm by 2 to convert to lb per acre, or divide lb per acre by 2 to get ppm. Make sure you understand the unit your chosen lab is using.

Spring soil samples will differ slightly from fall soil samples. For continuity of interpretation, be sure to collect soil samples at the same time of the year. This allows a producer to compare the historical soil samples with the current ones and make changes as necessary. Comparing the soil samples over time, along with good fertilizer application records, will allow the producer to make adjustments for individual fields as needed.

Once good soil samples are collected, and then analyzed in a good laboratory, the next thing is to evaluate the results for individual fields. Follow soil test recommendations for the individual field. Don't average soil test values across multiple fields – apply what is needed to the field that needs it. Generally, the best bang for the soil fertility buck is going to be soil pH management. Row crops perform best at a pH around 6.5. Maintaining a pH in this range optimizes availability of phosphorus and micronutrients, promotes good root growth and health and can positively influence the activity of certain herbicides.

How do you decide what nutrients or soil amendments should be added if the budget is limited? Liebig's Law of the Minimum is a good rule to remember when deciding which nutrient(s) to add. It states that crop yield is proportional to the amount of the most limiting essential nutrient. In other words, the addition of a non-limiting nutrient will not maximize

yield if the limiting nutrient is not addressed. Adding potassium to a phosphorus deficient soil will not remedy phosphorus deficiency or vice versa. Adding phosphorus to a soil with a pH of 5.3 is not going to be as effective for improving yield as liming the field and increasing the soil pH.

In very tight times with limited fertilizer budgets, rates might need to be cut in order to get several needed nutrients on the field. At what point is yield being lost due to a reduction in fertilizer additions? In these instances it would still pay to address soil pH. Work from The University of Tennessee showed that a half rate of limestone was almost as effective in neutralizing soil acidity as the full recommended rate - the benefit just didn't last as long. You can cut lime some, but acidity will eventually have to be addressed. Soil test values in the high range don't call for a fertilizer addition. Crops growing on soils testing in the 'medium' range are less likely to respond to fertilizer additions, especially when at the higher end of the medium range. The soils testing in the 'low' range for available nutrients are most likely to limit crop growth and are most likely to profitably respond to fertilizer addition. These are the fields to address first, followed by fields testing in the low end of the medium range.

One thing to avoid is using a "miracle product" that claims to replace conventional fertilizers at a fraction of the cost and nutrient rate. There are plenty of products available that have remarkable claims about reducing overall soil fertility needs. Be skeptical of products with claims like, two quarts per acre replaces X pounds of dry fertilizer. A pound of fertilizer is a pound of fertilizer regardless of the form. For example, a gallon of ammonium polyphosphate (APP, 10-34-0) weighs about 11.7 lb and contains about 4 lb P_2O_5. To obtain 50 lb P_2O_5/acre using APP will require 146 lb or 12.5 gallons APP/acre. To get the same 50 lb P_2O_5/acre with DAP (18-46-0) requires 109 lb DAP/acre. This 50 lb P_2O_5/acre will not be replaced by a product at a use rate of 1-2 quarts per acre, regardless of their claims. Don't spend $5 to $20/acre on these types of products in hopes of replacing a proven lime or fertilizer product – the money is better spent on proven products.

Maybe the opening paragraph should read "make well informed decisions and don't waste money where it isn't needed" rather than cut costs, cut costs, but that wasn't as catchy. We didn't really tell you any-

thing special or new, we just promoted that you use good basic agronomic principles. Maintaining good yields and watching the budget comes down to following basic crop production principles. If you can manage costs wisely while maintaining good yield potential in your fields, then you are in a better position for the seasonal weather to give you a nice profit. Take good soil samples and submit them to a reputable lab using appropriate soil test procedures. Evaluate all fertilizer and lime recommendations carefully, with an eye towards controlling costs. Soil sample analysis cost ranges from $0 (free) to about $10 per sample. What other important management practices can be completed at such a low cost? Address soil pH when it falls below 6.0 to 6.2. Match fertility applications to soil sample recommendations. Don't average fertilizer rates over several fields – apply what is needed where needed. When budgets are tight, address low testing nutrients first, then those at the low end of the medium test range. The lower the soil test value the greater the chance for a profitable crop response. Don't spend money on miracle products that merely claim to replace proven fertilizer products – go with what works.

Managing Through Tough Times

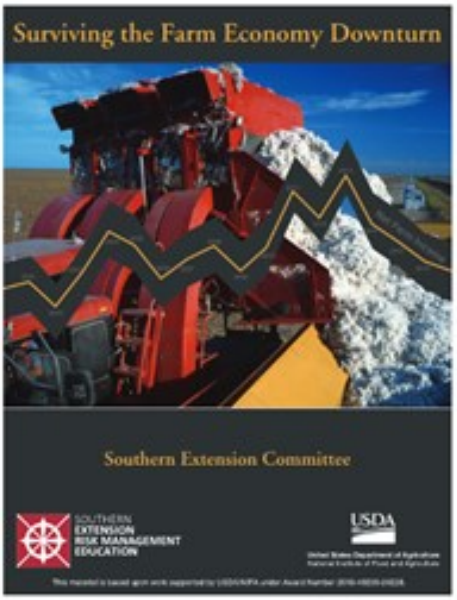
From Southern Ag Today 2.17.25 By: Jordan Shockley, University of Kentucky Associate Extension Professor & Steven Klose, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Professor and Associate Dept. Head for Extension, Department of Agricultural Economics

Back in 2015, Extension specialists across the Southeast (many of our current Southern Ag Today contributors) came together to address the decline in the farm economy, specifically declining commodity prices and increasing financial pressure. The resulting publication is a compilation of articles on topics including financial and risk management, marketing, farm management, trade, and stress management. The publication provides strategies for navigating financial difficulties, reducing risk, and identifying opportunities for growth even during downturns. While the publication is approaching ten years old, the core management strategies and concepts are still pertinent as we face a very similar farm economy today.

Key Farm Management Strategies include:

1. *Financial Resilience:* Carefully managing debt and maintaining cash flow are key to building resilience. Work closely with lenders to help monitor financial health and consider restructuring loans when necessary to preserve adequate working capital.
2. *Cost Control and Efficiency*: Reducing input costs, optimizing equipment use, and managing labor effectively can help improve profitability. Assessing operational expenses and cutting unnecessary expenditures are essential. Even the smallest changes can add up.
3. *Risk Management Strategies*: Utilizing crop insurance, following an effective marketing plan, diversifying income sources, and engaging in collaborative farming can help mitigate financial risk. Exploring all available government support programs and financial assistance options can provide relief during downturns.
4. *Market Adaptation and Diversification*: Considering alternative crops, livestock production adjustments, or producing for specialty markets can help maintain income. Understanding market trends and adapting production strategies accordingly is vital for long-term sustainability.

5. *Mental Health and Well-being*: Economic stress can take a toll on farmers' mental health. Seeking support, engaging with extension services, and maintaining a strong social network can help manage stress, depression, and other challenges related to financial strain.



For a deep dive on all economic topics, including the farm management strategies above, the full publication can be found here: "Surviving the Farm Economy Downturn" at https://tinyurl.com/farmdownturn.

GETTING STARTED WITH COMPOSTING

Building Your Compost Bin
- Purchase a ready-made bin or build your own using pallets, chicken wire, or other materials.
- Aim for a bin of at least 1 yard x 1 yard x 1 yard for optimal composting.
- Place your bin in a flat, well-drained area.

Composting:
- Include dried leaves, straws, twigs, coffee grounds, and even cardboard.
- Incorporate fresh grass clippings, vegetable scraps, and other plant materials.
- Avoid meat, oils, and dairy products.
- Mix the compost pile once a week to speed up decomposition.

Using Your Compost
- Gently incorporate the compost into the top few inches of soil.

Source: Rick Durham, extension professor
An Equal Opportunity Organization.

University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

Carter County
94 Fairground Drive
Grayson, KY 41143

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

CARTER COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES NEWSLETTER