

Boulder County Small Acreage Management Newsletter



Winter 2021

<http://boulder.extension.colostate.edu/natural-resources/>

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From the SAM Coordinator

I hope that you are all staying safe and healthy. It's nice to be getting these small snowstorms but I hope that we get some wet snows and nice gentle rains this spring to recharge our soil moisture.

Stay safe and healthy.

Thank you,

Sharon Bokan

Small Acreage Coordinator

sbokan@bouldercounty.org

303-678-6176, Cell 720-202-1969

SAM Newsletters Online

View previous newsletters via the SAM link above.

SAM Email Listserv

If you are reading this newsletter for the first time and are not subscribed to the Small Acreage listserv, you may request subscription by contacting the Small Acreage Coordinator sbokan@bouldercounty.org. This quarterly e-newsletter and other timely info will be distributed via this email listserv.

Subscribers may use the listserv also as a SAM info gathering mechanism. For example, you may inquire about who is available in the area supply hay, to perform swathing/baling, etc. The listserv is not a marketplace, however. Because it is hosted on the CSU server, **NO COMMERCIAL EMAILS ARE ALLOWED. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SELL ANYTHING VIA THE LISTSERV – THANK YOU!** I will remove you from the listserv if you use it in this manner. Use the newsletter ad section for these purposes.





Weather Outlook

The NOAA forecasts for the next 30 and 90 days are showing that the state will be above normal in temperature and the state about normal in precipitation.

<https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/90day/>

If you have not checked out NOAA's website, they have a lot of good information beside their predictions. There are sections for children, their publications and preparing for various weather conditions. <https://www.weather.gov/>

If you are interested in tracking the snowpack, you can check out the Natural Resources Conservation Service Snowtel website. On the site you can track the snowpack in the various river basins and many other features. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/co/snow/products/data/?cid=nrcs144p2_063094

Coming events and workshops

In cooperation with Larimer and Jefferson County Extension Offices and Jefferson County Invasive Weed Management, we will be offering an "Invasives 101" webinar series.

Join us for a 4 session speaker series to educate and inform landowners on invasive species

terminology, identification, treatment, and latest trends. Sessions will be held virtually from 6:00–7:30 pm on the following dates from late March until early May.

Free, registration required.

March 24 – Invasive Species – Understanding the Issues *Alicia Doran, Invasive Species Management Coordinator, Jefferson County*

April 7 – Intro to Integrated Pest Management *Steve Sauer, Boulder County Weeds Supervisor, Boulder County Parks and Open Space*

April 21 – Weed Identification and Management *Casey Cisneros, District Manager, Larimer County Weed District*

May 5 - Colorado's Aquatic Nuisance Species *Robert Walters, Invasive Species Specialist, Colorado Parks and Wildlife*

Register: <http://bit.ly/Invsp>

Presented by the Front Range Invasive Species Campaign



Extension Office Information

The Boulder County Extension Office is still closed and will be for the foreseeable future. The office was damaged when a fire sprinkler pipe broke in the ceiling. It is estimated that it will take 6 months to repair the damage and the office will remain closed during that time. If you need assistance, please reach out to us by phone or e-mail. If you need plants identified, you are welcome to send me photographs.

When taking the photos try to provide some close ups of leaves, flowers or seed heads (even old seed heads from last year can help). Grasses are harder to identify via photo but if you can provide photos of last years seed heads that helps. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions and I will do my best to assist you.

Winter Small Acreage Tasks

Winter weed management

There is a limit to what weed management you can do at this time of the year. Some winter annual weeds such as cheatgrass have started growing. You can pull or hoe the young seedlings. Remove the seedlings as they may re-root if left on the ground. You can remove and dispose of dead annual and biennial weeds that may have seeds still attached to reduce the number of seeds that you have in the ground for next year. You can undercut and remove the first season rosettes of biennial weeds.

As always, identify your weed and then determine what are the methods you can use to manage the weed, the best herbicide to use and the growth stage to spray for maximum effect.

Winter pasture management –

Grasses are dormant but will be coming out of dormancy soon. Once this happens, livestock can graze as long as you make sure you maintain a 4" stubble.

Reseeding –

You have until April 30th to reseed.

Water –

You don't need to be doing any irrigating now.

Plans and priorities –

Take time to do planning, cleaning and repairs.

Thinking about getting some chickens? Some considerations before you purchase

The local farm supply stores are starting to get chicks. Before you run out and purchase the coop, feeders, feed and the other supplies you need, make sure that this is something you want to commit to for many years to come. Owning chickens takes at least as much time and commitment as owning a pet.



Chickens can live for 6 plus years, but their egg production peaks at around 2 years. If you purchase chicks there is the chance that you will get a rooster which most municipalities do not allow. Sexing chicks is not 100% accurate so be ready to deal with a rooster if you get one. You can continue to keep the hens, but you get fewer eggs for the amount of feed they consume the older they get. If you are mainly interested in egg production, you can sell them and get a new flock. Know your options for getting rid of your hens before you get them. Most municipalities do not allow you to harvest your birds. Do not take your birds to an open space property and release them. It is an inhumane way to dispose of your chickens. They won't know where to find food or water and either starve or be taken by predators. It is illegal to feed predators and if you get caught doing this you can face a fine. You should not

expect your local 4-H or FFA member or other rural resident to be willing to take your unwanted chickens. Advertise on sites like Craig's List or check around for local swap meets where you can sell your birds. Check the land use or municipal codes in your area to determine your options. If you keep them and eventually, they die, most municipal trash collection services do not want the carcass in your trash. Check with your local veterinarian's office or humane society to see if they offer cremation services.

It's best to practice the all-in all-out system where you get rid of the whole flock before bringing in a new flock. This allows you to thoroughly disinfect the coop and other equipment and allow them to sit for a while before bringing in the new birds. You can do repairs or seal areas to prevent rodents from entering the coop. Trying to incorporate new birds into an existing flock may or may not work. Existing birds may peck and harass the new bird.

You need to be sure that you have the time to properly care for your birds. Check and clean the feeder and waterer daily and collect eggs at least twice preferably three times a day. Have a plan for those times when you are not home for someone else to take care of your hens and collect eggs. If this person has birds of their own, they need to wear different shoes and clothes and wash their hands between working with the two different flocks to prevent any potential disease spread. Make sure the neighbor understands how to take care of your flock.

Be sure you are willing to make the commitment before you bring the chicks home. If you would rather have hens that are already laying, check with local producers, 4-H and FFA students to see if they have birds for sale. The 4-H and FFA students normally have birds for sale at the

Boulder County Fair and Rodeo. We don't know what this year will bring for the Fair but if you are not in a hurry for birds, you might want to wait.

Additional poultry resources can be found on the CSU Extension publications website at <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/agriculture/?target=publications>

Rabies and Livestock

Recently, the Colorado Department of Agriculture announced that a mule in Eagle County has tested positive for the bat variant of rabies. The bat variant is not as common as the skunk variant in Colorado. Now is the time to get your animals vaccinated against rabies.

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system in mammals. There is no evidence that it affects animals other than mammals. It has not been known to occur in birds, fish, insects or reptiles. The virus spreads by exposure to the saliva of an infected animal which can occur through a bite, through a wound or through mucosal membranes such as the eyes or mouth. Symptom onset can take weeks to months depending on where the infection first enters the body and the amount of virus that enters. The closer to the brain that the infection occurs the quicker the infection makes it to the brain. Once symptoms are obvious there is no treatment. There are multiple variants of the virus but the most common here are bat and skunk. There is a raccoon variant that is found mainly in the Eastern U.S.

There are two forms of rabies, dumb and furious. Animal with the dumb form are calmer but not necessarily affectionate. Livestock are most likely to have the dumb form. Wild

animals are less likely to run from humans. In the furious form, the animals are very aggressive and may attack or have bizarre behavior. Foaming at the mouth and excess salivation may or may not be present.

For humans, if you are bitten by an animal suspected to have rabies, seek medical attention immediately. If the animal can be caught and contained safely, do so. If not, don't risk infecting other people. The brain is what is tested so do not shoot the animal in the head if you must euthanize it. Often people find what they think is a dead bat outside or inside their home and try to pick it up. It may not be dead and then they get bit. Be very careful when collecting or catching a potentially rabid animal so that you don't get bit.



Livestock are exposed when affected wildlife wander near them. The livestock's curiosity causes them to investigate the "new" animal and then they get bit. Livestock owners especially equine and bovine owners should consider vaccinating their animals against rabies. Keep food secured in such a way to not attract skunks and raccoons to limit possible exposures.

Symptoms of rabies in horses can vary and may be confusing. Signs may include obscure lameness, colic, incontinence, tremors, fever, ataxia (loss of body movements), paralysis,

depression, aggressiveness, sensitivity to touch and convulsions. Signs of rabies in cattle can be pruritus (sensation that causes the need to scratch the skin), ataxia, lameness, anorexia, hypersalivation, and aggression. Cattle may appear to be choking which often causes veterinarians or owners to place their arm down their throats exposing them to the virus. Sheep are similar to cattle in their symptoms with excessive salivation, abnormal behavior, difficulty swallowing, lethargy, tremors. They may all have aggressive wool pulling and excessive bleating. Goats more commonly have the furious form with aggressive behavior, salivation and excessive bleating.

Once an animal is showing rabies signs, it is too late. There aren't any treatments for rabies once an animal is showing signs. Unfortunately, an animal can be exhibiting symptoms which mimic other medical problems. This can cause multiple people to be exposed to the virus when trying to diagnose the problem.

Vaccines are available for pets (dogs, cats, ferrets), cattle, horses and sheep. The vaccines are good from one to three years depending on the vaccine. There aren't any vaccines available for goats and pigs.

<http://ag.ok.gov/ais/rabiemanagementlivestock.pdf>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/rabies-livestock>

<https://www.uaex.edu/publications/PDF/FSA-8006.pdf>

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1228/>

Land Recovery Post Wildfire

Year 2020 was a tough year not only due to COVID-19 but due to the wildfires that consumed the greatest number of acres in the state's history. Once landowners get over the initial shock, they immediately want to do something to fix the problem.

In some cases, we don't need to do anything. The landscape is adapted to having periodic fires. The timing on the fires ranged from every 10 years to 200 years. The lower the elevation, the more frequent and less intense the fires were. Higher elevation saw fires on a less frequent basis.

For areas that are not intensely burned, the ground vegetation can come back on its own. I visited a property hit by the Calwood fire after we had some snow last fall and the cool season grasses were already beginning to grow. The trees in that area were dead but the grass roots and other forbs had survived. Even in those areas where the trees were dense enough prior to the fire, that there wasn't much ground cover before the fire most likely have seeds and plant roots that start growing now they have more sunlight.

The areas that need the attention are those slopes steep enough that erosion is a problem. Without vegetation, less intense rain events fall that normally would not be a problem can cause the soil to erode causing the land to slide and potentially contaminate water supplies. There are multiple ways to slow the water down so that it does not erode the soil. Over the years, research projects have shown the best thing you can do is to get mulch on the ground. The mulch acts as protection for the soil by absorbing the impact of the raindrop so that it can be absorbed into the soil and not loosen soil particles. The soil surface only needs to be covered 70% in area by mulch to be effective. Weed free straw and wood chips or straws (can be made from the trees on the property) work well. You don't want the smooth chips from a garden center. You need the rough chips that lock the chips together and stay in place. If you live in a very windy area, consider using the wood products over the straw as they stay in

place better. The mulch needs to be a light layer (1" depth or less) not as deep as you would use in a landscape to hold in moisture or prevent weed growth.

If you plan to seed, you need to get the seed planted before you put the mulch down. If you have a hydrophobic layer from the fire, you need to break up that layer. An easy way to tell if your soil is hydrophobic is to pour some water on top of the soil. If it beads up and does not soak into the soil, you have a hydrophobic layer. If the water readily absorbs into the soil, you don't have hydrophobic soil. Hydrophobic soils can be broken up by just walking on the soil or raking it. The layer is usually not very thick or hard. If you can drive an ATV with something behind it to drag the soil, that works too.

When planting grass seed, you don't want to bury it very deep. Grass seed is fairly small and should be planted ¼ to ½" deep. So light raking is all that's needed or even the process of walking over the ground while seeding and mulching can be enough. The seeding window is approximately November 1 to April 30 up to 6200' and mid-October to mid-May for elevations up to 7500'.

If you need assistance post wildfire, please contact me with questions.

<https://boulder.extension.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/12/Post-Fire-Rehab-FAQ-Calwood-11.24.2020.pdf>

Drought and Your Pasture

As we have all seen, we are not getting any where near normal precipitation. Depending on what we receive in the coming months which are normally when we get most of our snow, you may need to revise your grazing plan.

If we don't receive normal precipitation, you need to consider purchasing additional forage for your livestock and limiting grazing time. Too often livestock owners give preference to the needs of their animals over the needs of their forage plants. Over grazing a pasture can take multiple years for the forage plants to recover and require extra time and money to manage the weeds that take advantage of the stressed forage plants.

Grass plants normally lose 30% of their roots in a normal year as a normal process like us losing hair and skin cells. If they also start losing roots due to lack of soil moisture this stresses the plants even more. Without roots to take up water and nutrients, the plants cannot maintain the above ground vegetation that your animals love to graze. The plants need this vegetation to be able to produce energy to survive the year. Removal of any vegetation in a drought year can damage and stress your plants even more.

In very dry years you must reduce and/or eliminate grazing completely. Your priority must be the health of your grasses. If you don't prioritize your grass health, you may not have grasses for your animals to graze. Renovation and reseeding take multiple years and money to renovate. If you have to reseed, you will not be

able to graze that pasture for a minimum of one and up to five years before the pasture is established and can be safely grazed. If conditions are not right the first year after you reseed, the seed may not germinate, and you have to wait yet another year before you can start grazing. It's far easier to preserve the forage plants you have than it is to have to renovate.

For additional information, please read this fact sheet. <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-reas/natural-resources/managing-small-acreage-pastures-during-and-after-drought-6-112/>

Place your SAM related classified ad or print advertisement here!

Classified Advertising Rates are as follows:

General Public, Individual: \$5

General Public, Business/Show: \$10

Email Sharon Bokan for more details

sbokan@bouldercounty.org