

Boulder County Small Acreage Management Newsletter



Summer 2021

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

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From the SAM Coordinator

I hope you are doing well and surviving the hot temperatures. With all the moisture we received this spring, the forage plants are doing well as are the weeds. It looks like first cutting hay production will be good this year.

Stay safe and healthy.

Thank you,

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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.

*Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Boulder County Cooperating.
Extension Programs are available to all without discrimination.*



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 below normal in precipitation.

https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=1

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/>

To follow the drought map in Colorado, here is the website.

<https://www.drought.gov/states/colorado>

Coming events and workshops

No small acreage events are planned at this time.



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Classes begin in August

See the schedules, pricing & register online

Extension Office Information

The main Boulder County Extension Office is closed for the foreseeable future. The office was damaged when a fire sprinkler pipe broke in the ceiling. We currently have no estimated time of the office re-opening. We will have some limited hours prior to the County Fair out of our office in the Clover Building (just east of the Natural Resources Building across the parking lot). Most samples will still not be accepted. We are still renting the hay probe, soil probe and honey extractors. Please check the website for the office hours. 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.

Summer Small Acreage Tasks

Weed management

The winter annuals done for the year. If you have any, it's best to remove them and the seeds they've produced so that the seeds won't be there next year. Summer annuals are growing, and some are blooming. Small young plants can be hoed, or hand pulled or sprayed with an herbicide either organic or synthetic. If you hoe or hand pull, remove the seedlings as they may re-root if left on the ground. You can undercut and remove the first season rosettes or cut off the flower stalks of biennial weeds. Manage your perennials by digging them, hand pulling, mowing or spraying

Make sure to read and follow the herbicide label for the temperature range that the herbicide can be used. Herbicides can volatilize and travel to other plants and damage them.

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.

Pasture management –

Animals can be out grazing until the height of their favorite grass is no lower than 4".

Reseeding –

You cannot reseed until this fall.

Water –

Take advantage of any irrigation water you can get. Even with all the precipitation this spring, our higher temperatures can quickly dry out soils.

Hay –

If you haven't hayed your field, do so as soon as

possible. If you can't get your fields cut and baled, let your animals out to graze to remove some of the vegetation. With the growth we've had this year, it can lay down and then shade out new growth next year.

Plans and priorities –

Fall is a good time to spray perennial weeds so you might want to be planning for a fall herbicide application.

Identify areas that need reseeding and estimate the amount of seed you will need. You can purchase the seed now, so you won't be trying to get it this fall. With more wildfires burning this year, seed may be in short supply. You need to store it in a cool dark location until you are ready to plant it.

Seed production

Have you ever thought about how the seed is produced that you plant in your garden or pasture?

It doesn't matter if it is the watermelon you had at your picnic, the grass or alfalfa that your livestock graze or the tomato in your BLT, someone had to raise the plant that produced the seed so that you could have the food you enjoy or that feeds your livestock.

Some seed companies produce seed on their own properties. The remainder is contracted out to private farmers. Seed farms are located in areas that provide the best growing environment for that particular crop. A lot of alfalfa, vegetable and grass seed is grown in Oregon and Idaho. In the Arkansas Valley in southeastern Colorado, they grow a lot of the melon family plants not only for producing the melons that we enjoy but also to produce seed for succeeding years. They have also developed new varieties through hybridization.

When growing plants for seed, plants of the same species and variety must be separated in order to keep the variety consistent. Depending on how the

plant is pollinated, this may mean separating different varieties of the same species by as far apart as a mile or more. This is based on how far pollinators such as bees can fly. For plants that are wind pollinated, prevailing winds must be taken into consideration. Grasses are wind pollinated although pollinators such as bees do land on and collect pollen from grasses. If plants rely on bees for pollination, farmers either have their own bees or they contract with a commercial beekeeper to bring in hives when the plants need to be pollinated.



During the growing season, workers survey the fields to make sure that the crop is consistent and remove weeds. Any plants that are not consistent with the variety being grown are removed so that their pollen and seeds don't contaminate the whole field.

Unlike most home gardeners, seed growers allow the fruit or vegetable to fully mature and produce seed. For some crops like beets and cabbages, this is a two growing season operation as the plants are biennials and don't produce seed until their second year. Once the seed is produced and is mature, the harvesting begins.

Harvesting grass seed is like harvesting wheat or barley. Depending on the grass, the crop is either cut and allowed to dry similar to hay (if the seeds don't easily fall off the plant) or the crop is harvested with a combine. Which method they use is determined by how easily and quickly the

seed drops from the plant. The material is threshed and winnowed if it was cut like hay to separate the seed from the leaves and stems. The seed whether threshed or combined is then sent through screens to remove debris, contaminants and other plant seeds. Samples are taken for purity and germination tests.

The seed industry has developed some harvesting equipment for some vegetables like the squash and melons, but others are still hand-picked and processed. The fruit (Cucumber, squash, pepper, tomato) is crushed and the non-seed material is removed by washing or removed by hand. The seed is washed and dried and then passed through a screen to remove any other contaminants or debris. Samples are taken for the purity and germination tests.

The next time you have a BLT or a piece of pumpkin pie, be glad that there are farmers who are willing to not only produce fruits and vegetables but those that are willing to grow the seed that produces those fruits and vegetables.

Birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)

I've had several landowner's contact me about what to do with birdsfoot trefoil that has invaded their pastures. Birdsfoot trefoil is a non-bloating legume related to alfalfa. It is a perennial. I suspect that our added precipitation this year may be the reason we are seeing more of it.



It does produce good forage for livestock although not as much as you get from alfalfa due to its smaller growth habit. Since it is a legume, it also stores nitrogen in the nodules in its roots. Having a mix of nitrogen users, grasses, and nitrogen producers/storers in a pasture/field is a good idea. The legumes put nitrogen in their roots which is eventually available to the grasses.

If you have just a few plants, you can dig them out. If you have a lot, you may want to consider either spot or full field spraying to kill them. Any broadleaf herbicide you use for the birdsfoot trefoil will also affect any other broadleaf plants you have in your field such as alfalfa and native plants. Herbicides you can use are clopyralid (Transline), glyphosate (Roundup, non-selective herbicide must be spot sprayed), or triclopyr (Garlon).

Safety around the Farm

Whether you have just an acre or 100 acres, you need to be aware of the hazards on your property. Staying safe and healthy needs to become a daily habit. Agriculture ranks in the top 5 every year for the most hazardous work environments. Taking time to review your operation and make a safety plan can prevent tragic accidents.

Equipment Safety

Learn how to operate your equipment safely by asking questions of the dealer (they may offer classes to help you learn to operate the equipment safely and get the most out of it) and reading the manual.

- Never remove guards that cover moving parts and belts.
- Do not reach across a power take off shaft (PTO) with the equipment running. Disengage the shaft and turn off the equipment.

- If you get a jam in a mowing blade turn off the mower before attempting to remove the jam.
- Remove the key prior to trying to work on a piece of equipment. This prevents someone else from starting the equipment while you are working on it.
- Don't wear loose clothing around moving parts as the clothing can get caught in the part and pull you into the equipment.
- If you have equipment with roll over protection do not remove it. If your equipment doesn't, there are retrofit roll over devices that can be installed.
- If you have a grain bin, be aware of the hazards of entering one. If you enter one with grain in it, make sure to wear the proper safety equipment and have someone else there. Many deadly accidents happen every year in grain bins, where a person enters the bin to work and then is engulfed in the grain and suffocates. Wear a harness and a properly anchored lifeline to prevent engulfment.
- Augers going into grain bins like PTO shafts can grab onto loose clothing and pull a person into the auger.
- Lock-out/Tag-out is a great practice to keep someone else from turning on power or a piece of equipment while you are working on it. A lock is placed on the device, preferably with a tag explaining what is being done. The person doing the work keeps the key with them. Once the work is complete, the area should be thoroughly checked to make sure no one else is around prior to restarting the equipment.



Livestock Safety

- If you decide to purchase livestock, learn how to handle them safely before you bring them home. Learn how they see and what they consider a threat (flight zone). Low stress handling will make it easier to handle and move your animals in all situations. Learning how to handle livestock is especially important with intact male animals as they can become very aggressive. Do not let children around intact animals and always have an escape route.

Vehicle Safety

- Practice driving with a trailer and practice loading your animals into a trailer. Evacuating your animals in an emergency will go smoother if the animals are accustomed to loading into the trailer when it's not an emergency. Driving a truck is different than driving a truck pulling a trailer.
- When driving farm equipment on roads, make sure that you have a slow-moving vehicle symbol displayed on the equipment and that you have proper reflectors on the rear. You also need to have good rear view mirrors so that you can see all around the vehicle.
- Load and unload vehicles and trailers on level ground.

Chemical Safety

- When using chemicals (like pesticides), always be sure to read and understand the label, wear the proper personal protective equipment and mix at the rate on the label.

Have the Material Safety Data Sheet available. Store chemicals properly to prevent spills and keep them away from children and pets.

Electrical Safety

- Be aware of electrical hazards such as overhead lines, buried cables when operating equipment. Repair or replace damaged electrical equipment and cords.

General Safety

- Do not operate equipment when tired, or after consuming alcohol or under the influence of certain prescribed medications.
- Know how to use a ladder to prevent falls. Make sure that ladders are in good condition and located properly.
- Never try to do a job by yourself that requires two or more people to do.

These are not all the safety steps you can perform to keep you and your family safe, but they are a start. Work safety is an attitude that takes practice.

References:

National Farmers Union <https://nfu.org/farmsafety/>
National Institute of Food and Agriculture <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/farm-safety>
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/oep/agctrhom.html>
Farm Bureau Safety and Health Network <https://www.fb.org/programs/safety-health/>
Colorado Farm Bureau <https://www.coloradofarmbureau.com/program/farm-safety-health/>

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