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For Immediate Release

BETTER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TURN INTO MULTIPLE BENEFITS

Producers Can Improve Herd Health, and Bottom Line Whille Protecting Water Quality

Highland, Kansas—Livestock producers gathered in Highland for a one-day livestock and water quality workshop last week. The workshop—organized by the Missouri WRAPS (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy)—focused on ways producers can implement best management practices (BMPs) while making their operation more profitable.

Carl Johnson, Missouri WRAPS coordinator, defined Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and how it applies to water quality. Johnson said TMDLs are the "crux of water quality". He explained that once the maximum amount of certain pollutants—such as nutrients or bacteria—is reached, that body of water is then placed on an impaired or 303(d) list. By utilizing BMPs on their farms, producers can assist in the improving water quality in the watershed, he said. "If these BMPs were widely implemented, it would help reduce the concentration of TMDLs," he said.

Johnson said producers can benefit in keeping these potential pollutants out of streams and rivers. He pointed out that soil erosion causes sediment issues; fertilizer run-off causes nutrient loading, and manure run-off causes bacteria issues. "The soil, fertilizer and manure are very valuable to the land owner on the land, but are a significant problem in the water—it is a win-win to keep these on the land," Johnson said.

Will Boyer, K-State Extension and Education watershed specialist, suggested ways to reduce winter -feed costs while improving both animal health and soil—using a local producer as an example of these practices. He said the best opportunity to do this is by extending the grazing season. Simple ways to extend the grazing season include utilizing crop residue, alternative forages, winter annuals and fescue, he explained. "It benefits the bottom line and if done right—can affect water quality," he said.

Cleaning up bale ring sites in the spring is also an important step in manure management, he said. Up to one million

stable flies can hatch from one bale ring site—and that is something to consider when studies indicate it takes just five flies per leg to have impact on a calf's growth performance, he said.

Kansas State University Livestock Specialist Dr. Joel DeRouchey also stressed the importance of utilizing the manure from a bale ring site. He said that studies indicate E. coli remains in a vacant bale ring site after three months. He also noted there is less odor when manure is piled for composting. "Stockpiling manure reduces surface area, which in turn reduces the odor," he said.

De Rouchey also explained the dietary intake of nutrients directly correlates to the amount of that nutrient in the manure. "If we over feed it, where does it go?" he asked.

He said typically a phosphorus supplement is not needed for most beef, but it is still fed. "There is a huge economical return in not overfeeding—especially when you consider mineral phosphorus costs $650 a ton," he said. To be more efficient, DeRouchey suggested reevaluating supplement use and seeking assistance from feed suppliers or extension agents.

Jody Holthaus, K-State Research and Extension's Meadowlark District Livestock and Natural Resources Agent, said up to 50 percent of hay can be lost to improper storage and feeding. She suggests storing hay bales end to end in rows three to four feet apart. The rows should run north to south on a slight slope and be away from any tree lines. Holthaus said a solid base such as rock or a feeding pad helps keep the bottom of the bale dry. She said storing hay correctly helps preserve the bale and avoid excess moisture from seeping into the bale. After all, she mentioned, the outer four inches of the bale make up 25 percent of the total bale. To avoid waste during feeding, a study indicated cone-shaped bale feeders with slanted bars are best. Holthaus said the study calculated a three and one half percent loss from this type of feeder, which mimics the grazing position.

Ed Reznicek, field organizer with the Kansas Rural Center's Clean Water Farms Project, shared a variety of tools available to help producers assess his or her farm. He said the "Concentrated Animal Feeding Site-Quick Assessment" may indicate a potential pollution area for farmers. On the other hand, a more in depth tool is the River Friendly Farms Environmental Self-Assessment (RFFP). Reznicek said the RFFP allows the producer to "step back and take a comprehensive look at your operation."

Doniphan County Extension Agent Mindy Young relayed Dorivar Ruiz Diaz's presentation, which compares manure and fertilizer. The presentation indicates that manure is readily available as Kansas ranks second in cattle production and ninth in swine production. Livestock manure can be a valuable nutrient source—however it should be analyzed and applied based on the numeric nutrient content and the crop nutrient needs. Time of application is important to consider as the ground should be 50 degrees or above to fully utilize the nutrients. "Avoid application to frozen/snow soil to avoid runoff," the presentation stated.

Don Jones, water quality program manager with the State Conservation Commission, and Sarah Falk, director of the Doniphan County Farm Service Agency (FSA), were on-hand to discuss funding opportunities for producers. Jones said cost-share funding is available through a variety of programs and producers should contact their local conservation district for more information. Falk mentioned a variety of low-interest rate loans available for farmers through FSA.

The workshop was sponsored by Missouri River WRAPS; Atchison, Brown, Doniphan, Leavenworth, Nemaha and Wyandotte County Conservation Districts; State Conservation Commission; Glacial Hills RC & D; Kansas Department of Health and Environment; Kansas Rural Center, and K-State Extension and Research (Atchison, Brown, Doniphan and Leavenworth Counties and the Meadowlark District).

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