Farm Views

Deadline Approaches to Terminate Farm Leases

August 31 is the deadline for landlords to notify tenants if they are terminating a verbal farm lease arrangement, effective March 1, 2001. Generally, the turnover rate for rental land is very small in Nebraska, averaging about eight percent. Leases usually run an average of 15 years.

However, to make this transition process go smoothly, follow these tips:

—Usually a tenant will know about the termination of a rental contract before the deadline, but notification still needs to be done formally and legally. The landlord needs to prove he or she has sent the tenant a notice of termination. This notice should be a registered letter written by an attorney. Be sure the notice arrives by August 31 and have proof that it was sent.

—An attorney should be involved in all stages of the termination process. It's easy to make a mistake, and something done wrong won't stand up in court if a disagreement occurs.

—A tenant should never let a rental agreement reach termination due to poor management practices. Keep the line of communication open and visit with the landlord regularly.

—If the tenant disagrees with the termination, he or she should visit with the landlord to see what can be done or for the reason of termination. Usually changes that occur are because of producer downsizing or expanding. Only in a few cases does a landlord terminate a lease because of poor management practices.

For more information, refer to NebFact 91-42 Farm Lease Termination (Revised May, 1997). This can be found on the web at: http://ianrwww.unl.edu/pubs/farmmgt/nf42.htm (TD)

SOURCES: Dave Aiken, J.D., water law specialist, and Bruce Johnson, Ph.D., agricultural economist, both NU/IANR.

Be Wary of Nitrate, Prussic Acid Poisoning This Summer

Prussic acid and nitrate poisoning are a very real concern this year due to the drought. These poisonings may occur in all livestock, but cattle and sheep are the most sensitive. The most dangerous forages are those stressed by drought or other conditions and would include sudan grass, forage sorghum, field corn, milo, and sorghum-sudan grass hybrids used for summer pasture, green chop, hay, or silage.

All plants contain some nitrate, but excessively high amounts are likely to occur in forages grown under stressed conditions. Nitrates are most abundant in the lower six- to eight-inch stem base of plants. Usually livestock don't graze lower stems until leaves and tops have been removed, so nitrates rarely are a problem in summer annual pastures unless cattle are forced to graze very short. Use extra caution when feeding hay or green chop because the nitrate-filled stems are mixed in with the rest of the plant. Green chop is the most risky substance for nitrate poisoning. Feed green chop immediately after chopping, because it can become 10 times more toxic if allowed to heat.

The best poison prevention is to control the type and quantity of forage offered to livestock. Don't turn animals out when they are very hungry, and don't allow them to graze the bottom six inches of summer annuals.

To reduce the nitrate content of your harvested feed, cut plants high, leaving eight or more inches of stubble so nitrates remain in the field stubble. Another way to reduce nitrates in feed is to make it into silage. Up to half of the nitrates are neutralized during fermentation in well-made silage.

Regardless of what you do to reduce nitrate levels in your feed, never assume your feed is safe. Always collect samples, especially from what might be the most hazardous feed, and analyze them for nitrates before feeding. Then use these test results to guide you toward safe feeding.

Nitrate poisoning can be quickly fatal. Signs of nitrate poisoning include dark brown blood, labored or noisy breathing, excessive salivation, bloating, tremors, inability to rise, coma, and death. Females may abort offspring because the fetus doesn't get enough oxygen.

Animals poisoned with nitrate can be treated by intravenous injections of methylene blue, if diagnosed in time.

Prussic acid can be a problem in sudan grass and sorghum sudan hybrids. Sudan grass is best grazed after it gets 18 inches tall. Sorghum-sudan crosses are best left until 20-24 inches to avoid prussic acid poisoning.

Signs of prussic acid poisoning can occur within 15 to 20 minutes to a few hours after animals consume potentially toxic forage. Bright cherry-red blood, excitement, rapid pulse rate, and generalized muscle tremors occur initially, followed by rapid and labored breathing, staggering, and collapse. Foaming at the mouth, excessive tearing, and voiding of urine and feces, may occur. Treatment must be administered quickly because death can occur within minutes during severe convulsions.

Prussic acid poisoning can be treated with sodium nitrate intravenously. Be certain that nitrates aren't a problem before administering the sodium nitrate, and never use commercial preparations intended for treating prussic acid poisoning for nitrate poisoning.

With both cases, it is best to consult a veterinarian to confirm the diagnosis and prescribe treatment. (TD)

SOURCE: Bruce Anderson, Ph.D., forage specialist, NU/IANR

Protect Hearing on the Farm

The drone and roar of farm equipment impairs hearing. Although there are federal safe limits for sound levels, ways to measure them precisely, aren't readily available to farmers.

How loud is too loud? If you can hear your irrigation engine from a mile away, you should wear hearing protection when you check the well.

Hearing loss can be temporary and return overnight, but long-term noise can lead to permanent loss. Excess noise not only risks losing the sense of hearing, it aggravates fatigue and stress, and thus, slows reaction time to hazardous situations. Hearing should be checked annually and protective hearing devices worn as needed.

Federal guidelines for maximum noise level are 85 decibels at any time. Hearing protection, such as ear muffs or ear plugs, should be worn whenever the noise approaches this level. Stuffing cotton wads in your ears doesn't protect hearing.

When shopping for protective equipment to protect hearing, look for the noise reduction rating (NRR) number. The higher the number, the greater the protection. However, don't assume the device will reduce the noise level by the total amount. For example, an NRR for a set of ear plugs may reduce the noise level by only 10-15 decibels, depending on the predominant frequencies in the noise source. Noise reduction effectiveness may be reduced if the device isn't fitted or worn properly.

Protective ear muffs must fit the individual, so try them on for comfort and effectiveness. They should fit snugly, but not too tight. Brush back hair so the muffs directly contact ears. Muffs are most protective when the strap is over the top of the head. Test how well the muffs will work by listening to a loud noise with them on. If the noise volume is significantly reduced and some frequencies eliminated, they offer some protection.

Ear plugs, on the other hand, may take some getting used to. They should fit comfortably in the outer ear canal and not be painful. Some plugs are rolled and inserted so the plug expands in the ear. Others are simply wiggled in. Follow manufacturer directions for proper use.

People who hear a continuous roaring or rumbling hours after the work day ends are at risk for a hearing loss. Ringing noises and muffled sounds indicate a potential problem.

Remember, to reduce noise at the source. A new muffler on the tractor will reduce engine noise. Loose or missing weather stripping around cab doors and

*See **HEARING** on page 11*

Fuel Price Adds $10 Per Acre to Irrigation Cost

In 1999, the average farm (off-road) diesel fuel price was around $0.70 per gallon. The current price for diesel is around $1.10. What effect will this have on the cost of irrigation in Nebraska?

To answer this question, we must make some assumptions about area irrigated, depth of water applied, the pumping water level, system pressure, and the efficiency of the pumping plant. For our analysis, we will assume 125 acres irrigated with a center pivot, a gross irrigation application of 15 inches, a lift of 90 feet from the pumping water level in the well to the pressure gauge, a system pressure of 40 PSI, and an irrigation pumping plant operating at the Nebraska Performance Criteria (NPC) for deep-well turbine pumps.

Given these assumptions, a diesel-powered pumping plant would consume 3100 gallons of diesel for the season. Using the average 1999 diesel price of $0.70 per gallon, would have resulted in a season-long fuel cost of $2,172.00. At $1.10 per gallon of diesel, the season-long fuel cost would be $3,413.00. This is an increase of $1,241 as a result of the increase in fuel price. Expressed on a per acre basis, it amounts to $1,241 per 125 acres equals $10 per acre.

Other fuel sources could also be compared. A system powered by LP (liquid propane) gas at the NPC would have consumed 5,628 gallons of fuel. A system powered by natural gas would have consumed 628 mcf (thousand cubic feet). An electrical powered system would have consumed 43,814 kW.h. The reader can multiply the estimated fuel use by their 1999 and 2000 fuel costs to compare the effect of price changes. (TD)