

Understanding Nebraska's Open Burning Law

Questions sometimes arise about open burning and what materials can be legally burned in Nebraska. To clarify this matter, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture has worked with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the State Fire Marshal's Office in the preparation of a news release on this topic.

In DEQ's news release, they state that the most important rule is that only tree limbs, vegetation and non-treated wood are permissible to burn in Nebraska. Items such as shingles, plastics, tires and wood that's been chemically treated, should never be burned. There is good reason for this rule — burning such items can create toxic fumes that contaminate the air. Nebraskans should instead seek safe alternatives, such as sending the materials to a landfill or recycling. Burying these materials on your property is also unsafe and against the law.

Since 1980, Nebraska state statutes have placed a ban on all bonfires, outdoor rubbish fires and fires for the purpose of clearing land throughout the state. This may only be waived by the issuance of a burn permit by the local fire chief or his/her designee. There are numerous safety issues to be considered in the issuance of this permit,

including weather conditions and location of the burn to ensure that the fire does not spread or cause harm to the public. It is, therefore, essential that a permit be sought that involves outdoor burning, excluding cookouts and campfires.

As stated previously, only limbs, vegetation and untreated wood are permissible to burn. Even if the proper local and state permits have been obtained, the agency can pursue penalties if non-permitted materials are being burned at the site. Since plastics may not be burned legally and take up valuable space in landfills where they last almost indefinitely, Lancaster County Extension provides an alternative disposal method for agricultural pesticide containers. Containers brought to our program are inspected and stored in dedicated semi-trailers until they can be processed into a more compact form for shipment to recycling centers. The plastic is used for specific, environmentally safe uses such as railroad ties, fork lift pallets used in the agricultural chemical industry, parking lot tire bumpers, etc. and do not enter the general recycled plastic channels.

Plastic agricultural pesticide containers ranging in size from 16 fluid ounce to five gallon jugs

and 30 gallon bulk pesticide drums can be recycled in this program. They will be inspected by extension personnel before being accepted and placed on the trailer. All containers must be triple rinsed or power rinsed, with no obvious pesticide residue inside or out. Caps and labels must be removed (except paper labels that are one layer thick and glued to the container are acceptable). Containers that don't meet cleanliness requirements remain the responsibility of the party in possession. They can be dropped off for recycling year round by appointment at the Lancaster Extension office. Public collection days are conducted on specific dates in coordination with participating agricultural supply outlets throughout the area during the summer months. Some agricultural chemical suppliers will accept rinsed containers during the growing season or perhaps year round. These are recycled in the same manner as those brought to the extension office.

Additional information on open burning is available from DEQ's news release at www.deq.state.ne.us/press.nsf/pages/pr030909 or by contacting Brian McManus, DEQ, at 471-4223; or Ray Nance, State Fire Marshall at 471-3183. (TD)

Fall is a Great Time to Control Winter Annual Weeds

Winter annual weeds (henbit, horseweed, pennycress, etc.) can be quite susceptible to fall herbicide application. While many farmers may still be busy with harvest and storage concerns, there is still plenty of time to attack these weeds this fall. Winter annual weeds emerge in the fall from early September to November. In spring, they bolt and produce seeds, and in the fall, the cycle begins all over again.

Many people wait until spring to attempt to control these weeds. To achieve the best control, these weeds should be sprayed as early as possible in the spring; however, often several things may affect that. First is Mother Nature. Early spring weather is often unpredictable, ranging from 80° F one day to 20° F and six inches of snow another day. It also can be

difficult to get a sprayer over the ground in spring and herbicide performance may be reduced in cooler weather. The second factor is the growth stage of winter annual weeds. In spring they are in their reproductive mode. They bolt quickly, flower and before you know it they are setting seed. Since the plant is larger and flowering, it is less likely to get a lethal dose of herbicide.

This all points to why fall is a great time to control winter annuals: The weather is more cooperative and weeds are typically in the rosette (vegetative) stage and more susceptible to herbicides.

Timing is not as critical as you may think. Winter annuals can typically be sprayed from late September until early December, weather permitting. Of course if snow is on the

ground, don't expect good weed control, but if there is another open fall, a fall application can work quite well.

In addition, fall applications usually require less herbicide and less expense. Some of the common winter annuals (henbit, horseweed and pennycress) can be readily controlled with just 1-1.5 pints of 2,4-D or 1 pint 2,4-D plus 4 ounces dicamba, 24 ounces of glyphosate, or 1 pint 2,4-D plus 16 ounces glyphosate. It should be noted that atrazine is not labeled for fall application in Nebraska.

All in all fall application will give you more bang for your buck plus it will give you an excuse to get out of the house and into the tractor. (TD)

Source: Brady Kappler, Weed Science Educator

"Megaforges of Agriculture" Seminar Nov. 18 in Bruning

Today's profitable agricultural producers know they must compete in a global market to survive. Decisions regarding crop and livestock production, marketing and risk management expand beyond the borders of their farms and ranches. That's why the *Farmers & Ranchers College* will be hosting Dr. David Kohl as he presents, "The Megaforges of Agriculture: What's Up, Doc?" at the Opera House in Bruning on Tuesday, Nov. 18, 1:30-4 p.m.

Dr. Kohl's presentation examines the big picture aspects that impact the lives of agricultural producers. Included is Kohl's insight on domestic and export markets, government policy, technology, interest rates, inflation, stock market trends, land values and the condition of the general economy.

Dr. Kohl currently serves as Professor of Agricultural Finance and Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia. He has conducted more than 3,000 workshops and seminars for producers, bankers and agribusiness groups. In addition, he has published 4 books and over 400 articles on financial and business-related topics and regularly writes for *Farm Journal*, *Ag Lender*, *Top Producer*, *Journal of Agricultural Lending* and *Soybean Digest*. (TD)

Storage Methods to Reduce Hay Losses

Hay is selling at a premium this year. It is, therefore, even more important to minimize losses from spoilage and to maintain nutrient quality. Hay stored outside will be damaged by rain, snow, wind and ice. If possible, store hay inside or cover it with a canvas or plastic tarp. The average round bale that is stored out in the weather loses about one fourth of its original nutrients during storage.

For instance, do you usually line up round bales so the twine sides touch each other? Or stack your bales? If so, extra spoilage will occur where these bales touch because rain, snow and ice will gather in these spots instead of running off. Round bales butted end-to-end, cigar-like, usually have less spoilage because there are no "valleys" to collect moisture.

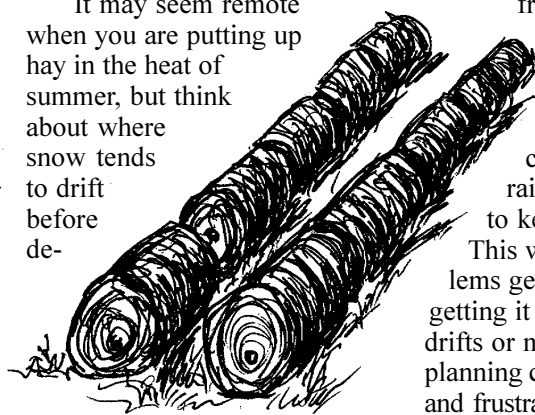
It may seem remote when you are putting up hay in the heat of summer, but think about where snow tends to drift before de-

ciding where to store bales in the field. Prevailing winter winds are from the north or northwest in eastern Nebraska. Placing hay next to fence lines or trees can result in their being engulfed in snow drifts later on.

Even when placed on open ground, round bales in east-west rows often have drifts on the south side. As snow melts, it soaks into the bales or makes the ground muddy. Plus, the north side never gets any sun so it's slow to dry. Bales that are oriented north-and-south will cause fewer drifts to form next to the bales and the hay will dry more quickly because the sun and prevailing winds will hit both sides of the row.

Most important is the bottom of your bales. Always put bales on higher, well-drained ground so water drains away from them. Besides placing them on higher ground, if possible, place the bales on a bed of crushed rock, on railroad ties or on pallets to keep the bottoms dry.

This will also reduce problems getting to your hay or getting it moved due to snow drifts or mud. Just a little pre-planning can save valuable hay and frustrations this winter. (TD)



Consider Stand Density, Weeds When Rotating Alfalfa

It may be time to rotate alfalfa fields to improve production. Several factors are important in determining this.

Alfalfa needs to be rotated when the stand gets too thin. A field's density is a good indicator of how thin the plants have become. Older, dryland fields worth saving should have 30 or more shoots coming from two or more plants per square foot.

Irrigated fields should have 40 or more shoots from three or more plants per square foot. If the stand is thinner than these guidelines, it may be time to start a new field next spring in another location.

Weed density should be considered. If fields are getting weedier each year and have many perennial plants such as bluegrass, dock or dandelions,

the alfalfa stand may lack the vigor or density to compete. Again, if fields meet this condition, it's time to plant a new field.

Sometimes alfalfa stands can last a long time. However, even if a stand is thick and relatively weed-free, it may still be time to rotate alfalfa fields. For example, many dryland fields yield well for several

years. But once they exhaust all available subsoil moisture, yields can drop, even though stands may still be thick. In these fields, yield is limited only to what annual rainfall can support. Many dryland fields have reached this stage.

In this case, rotating to a new field offers a fresh source of deep subsoil moisture. In addition, the crop that follows

alfalfa will benefit from free nitrogen and a rotation-based yield boost. Rotating alfalfa through fields more frequently will produce this boost more often. (TD)

SOURCE: Bruce Anderson, Ph.D., forage specialist, NUI/ANR