

## Top 5 Ag Topics From 5 Years



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The model of Extension has shifted over time, but the mission of “helping Nebraskan’s enhance their lives through “research-based education” has remained the same. I hope I have been able to achieve this mission in my time in Lancaster County, but I am sad to say I have left Extension for a career in private industry.

In the five years I have been in Lancaster County, there are a few agricultural topics that most-commonly landed on my desk, my phone or my email. What better way to help address these issues than to tackle them right up front? Although, Extension receives a wide range of requests or issues, I have compiled a top five list of the most popular issues.

### 1. Pasture Management

The most common issue I receive has to do with pasture management. There are many reasons for this, but the biggest reason is, it can be pretty challenging. The area soil types, range in management strategies, variable weather patterns and just plain logistical challenges, can make managing pasture or rangeland difficult. This makes each situation unique, but I will cover some overarching themes I come across.

The most common challenge is weed control. The best way to prevent a weed from growing is to have grass “out compete” the weeds. The most common challenge for that is caused by

overgrazing. This can be due to overstocking, leaving animals on too long, poor quality grass, horses grazing or lack of cross fencing. The best advice I can give is to make smaller paddocks (or small pastures) and rotate when grazed down to 4 inch height (this can vary). This takes fence, time and money, but it will increase your grazing days and decrease weed pasture. There also may be cost-share funds for cross-fencing through the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Cedar trees and locust trees, among other trees, continue to invade pastures and decrease the grazing value of the land. The best strategy for this is prescribed burning. This poses many challenges and risks, but is nature’s way of restoring

for very small trees or used on recently-cut trees.

When restoring these pastures or planting new grass, it can be difficult to know what to plant. This depends on what grows well in your area and what you plan to do with it. Grasses can either be cool-season or warm-season and this determines when it grows the best. In our climate, cool-season grasses grow well from April to mid-June and September through mid-October. Warm seasons will grow well from mid-June through August, but weather conditions dictate the success in any given year. It is best to have both warm-season and cool-season grasses to graze, but these should, ideally, be in different paddocks. Mixing cool-season with warm-season is not recommended, since the cool-season will often dominate.

Resources and Services:

- Getting to Know Your Pastures: Techniques to Enhance Monitoring <http://extension-publications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g2212.pdf>



Photo: Tyler Williams

Grazing management is key for weed control.

grasslands. The local fire department, prescribed burn groups and Pheasants Forever may be resources for burning pastures. Cutting and removing trees is likely the best option for larger trees. There are some herbicide options found in the 2020 Guide for Weed, Disease, and Insect Management, but these are often

- Recommended establishment and seed selection can be found here: <http://extension-publications.unl.edu/assets/html/g1705/build/g1705.html>
- Certified Perennial Grass Varieties Recommended for Nebraska <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/ec120.pdf>

## EXTENSION POSTPONEMENTS, CANCELLATIONS & CHANGES

Due to Covid-19, postponements, cancellations or altering of teaching and gathering events connected with Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County continues. Please refer to our website (<https://lancaster.unl.edu>) or connect with Extension staff for the status of events.

The Lancaster County Extension office lobby is now open. We want to do our best to assist you in any way we can, while also protecting the public and our staff. Extension staff are available via phone (leave a message at 402-441-7180 and someone will return your call) or email ([lancaster@unl.edu](mailto:lancaster@unl.edu)). Many of Extension’s educational resources are online (<https://lancaster.unl.edu>).

- Prescribed Burn Associations <https://nebraskapf.com/prescribed-burn-associations-pba/>

### 2. Farmland Rental and Lease Information

Two unique issues regarding farmland ownership found in Lancaster County are the challenge of urbanization and development on agricultural land, and the number of absentee landowners residing in the county. As the population of Lancaster County (estimated at over 300,000) continues to increase development of housing, acreages, schools, etc., the value of each parcel of land can vary significantly. Landowners want to know what it is worth, what they can do with the land and how much to charge someone else to use the land.

My first response to all of this is there is not a single source or number to give the value of the land. The value is often determined by who owns it or wants to own it and can be heavily dependent on local nuances. In order to get an official estimate or appraisal, contact a Nebraska licensed appraiser [https://appraiser.ne.gov/appraiser\\_listing.html](https://appraiser.ne.gov/appraiser_listing.html).

Cash rent or lease arrangements are common questions and the 2020 estimated values for this information was presented in the May 2020 Nebline. This information can be valuable to find the “ball park” rental rates in the area; however, these are estimates provided by land managers in the area and should serve as a guide. The number you eventually determine should be dictated by land quality, local demand, discussions with partners and most importantly, discussions with the tenant. Communication with the tenant is number 1, 2 and 3 when it comes to importance for deciding rental agreements and rates.

- A good resource to access farm management and lease information is <https://lancaster.unl.edu/ag/farm-mgt>
- Southeast Nebraska Ag Economist Extension Educator, Austin Duerfeldt, [aduerfeldt2@unl.edu](mailto:aduerfeldt2@unl.edu)

### 3. Crop Nutrient Management

When all things go exactly as planned, nutrient management in crop production can be fairly straight-forward. In

see TOP 5 AG TOPICS on page 3

## EXTENSION RESOURCES

[disaster.unl.edu/coronavirus-covid-19-resources](https://disaster.unl.edu/coronavirus-covid-19-resources)

Find resources related to COVID-19:

- Children & Families
- Food Access & Food Safety
- Mental Wellness
- Ag Producers
- Businesses

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