Ag & Natural Resources Newsletter

SPRING 2025

Cooperative Extension Service

PAUL SIZEMORE - OWSLEY CEA
For Ag & Natural Resources
Email: psizemor@uky.edu
Phone: (606)593-5109
Visit us on the web at:
https://owsley.ca.uky.edu

Find us on

Upcoming Events

April

23rd – Sampling and Best Produce Practices Training for Farmers Market at the Owsley County Extension Office 1:00 p.m. with Agent Paul Sizemore.

May

***13th* – Kudzu Control at the Owsley County Extension Office 6:00 p.m. Daniel Skinner Ky Fish and Wildlife.**

***14th* – Raised Bed Gardening Workshop at the Owsley County Extension Office 5:00 p.m. with Agent Paul Sizemore.**

***20th -23rd* - Senior Voucher Distribution for Seniors who qualify, call 593-5109 for more information.**

***22nd* – Owsley County Beef Producers Meeting at the Owsley County Extension Office 6:00 p.m. Doug Wilson NRCS Programs and Agent Paul Sizemore Forage Improvement**

***29th* – Alpha-gal Syndrome Webinar at the Owsley County Extension Office 7:00pm until 8:30pm**

June

***3rd* - Farmers Market Opening Day**

IN THIS ISSUE

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

Dear Ag Newsletter Recipients,

Hope all is well with you, it has been a long winter, but the weather is starting to get a little warmer each week. As we move into the spring and then summer, we have some exciting programs coming up that may interest you here at the Owsley County Extension Office.

We have been training and offering Gardening Classes for the upcoming Farmers Market that will open on Tuesday, June 3, 2025, for the season. On April 23, I will be offering a class to certify individuals on Sampling and Produce Best Practices (PBPT) and on May 20-23 we will be distributing Senior Voucher to those Senior Citizens who qualify to receive Vouchers to be used at the Farmers Market.

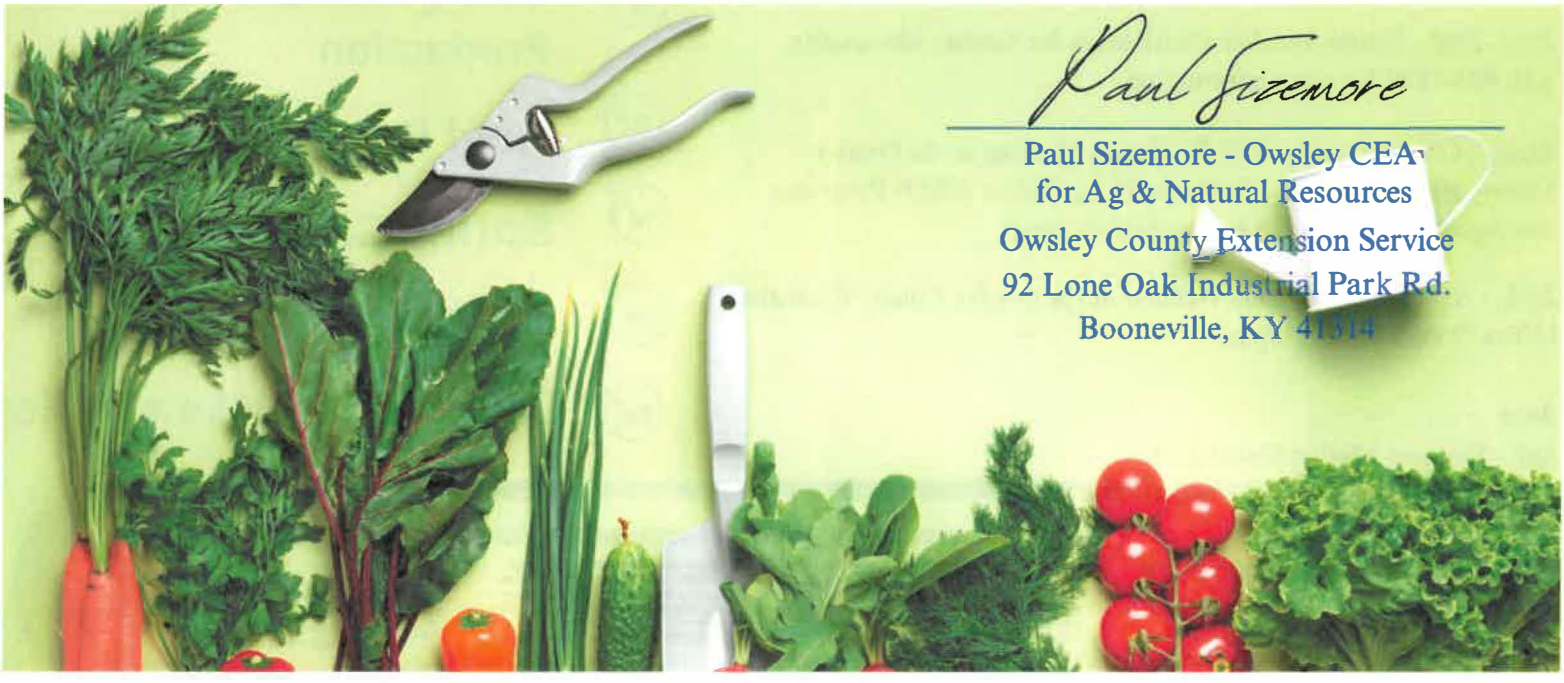
Many of you have had issues with Kudzu, an invasive plant that can literally take over an area quickly. On May 23, 2025, I will have a class on Kudzu Control as well as other invasive species. Daniel Skinner with KY Fish and Wildlife will be here to talk to us about managing Kudzu over the long term.

On May 14. I will be doing a Raised Bed Workshop to explain the basics of construction and how to get started with Raised Beds. I will be offering future programs and topics at a later date on Raised Beds as the season progresses.

Owsley County Beef Producers will have their spring meeting on May 22, 2025. Doug Wilson will be here from NRCS to discuss the numerous cost share programs that are available through his office to help improve your operations and I will be discussing Forage Improvements. This class is open to everyone, not just Beef Producers.

Last but not least we are hearing more and more about a Tick Transmitted Disease called Alpha gal. On May 29, 2025, we will be hosting an informative webinar through the University of Kentucky to help people cope with this Issue.

All of these programs and times are listed in this newsletter, and I will be offering future programs to be announced later. You can check programs through our Facebook page, both the Owsley County Cooperative Extension Service and my personal page at Paul Sizemore. Or feel free to call 606-593-5109 or stop by the office anytime for more information.



Home Remedy Pest Control

The rise of "homemade" or "DIY" pest control remedies has prompted many individuals to experiment with natural solutions in an effort to avoid harsh chemicals and save on costs. However, before using or making your own pesticides, it's essential to understand their potential risks, legal implications, and effectiveness. Here's a look into the concerns and legalities surrounding homemade pesticides.

Are Homemade Pesticides Legal?

In the United States, homemade pesticides fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). FIFRA mandates that all pesticides, whether homemade or commercial, must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or qualify for an exemption. Products registered by the EPA have been thoroughly tested for effectiveness and safety to applicators, consumers, the environment, and plants. When products are used according to label instructions, we can be assured they are not harmful. While natural ingredients like garlic or vinegar might seem harmless, these mixtures are still considered pesticides and are subject to the same regulations as store-bought products. The issue lies in the lack of oversight on homemade remedies. Since many DIY concoctions are not registered, users can unknowingly violate FIFRA regulations. Even if the ingredients themselves are considered safe, improper usage or inadequate labeling can create risks, making it crucial to verify whether a homemade pesticide complies with regulatory standards. In addition to FIFRA, Section 408 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA) provides the EPA authorization to set tolerances and maximum residue limits for pesticides on foods. Tolerances set by the EPA are "safe" or there is "reasonable certainty that no harm will result from aggregate exposure to the pesticide residue." (Source- EPA Summary of FFDCA website)

E*ffectiveness of Homemade Remedies*

Although some homemade remedies, such as soapy water or vinegar-based sprays, are often touted as effective pest control solutions, their actual efficacy is highly variable. Unlike commercial products that are rigorously tested for performance, homemade pesticides lack scientific data to support their reliability in controlling pests. Many online recipes simply do not have the potency or consistency required to target pests effectively, and misuse can even exacerbate the problem.

For instance, while dish soap may kill certain pests by suffocating them, its detergent properties can also harm plants by stripping protective waxes from their leaves. Furthermore, formulations of household products such as dish soap may change without any obvious indication on the packaging, resulting in different effects on plants from batch to batch of homemade pest control remedies. This is just one example of how homemade mixtures, while seemingly harmless, may cause damage to your plants or the environment. In contrast, registered commercial pesticides are designed to work more effectively without posing harm to plants when used according to instructions.

Health & Environmental Concerns

Homemade pesticides may seem like an environmentally friendly alternative to chemical-laden commercial products, but they often come with hidden dangers. For example, some homemade solutions can be toxic to pets or children, especially if ingested or improperly stored. Furthermore, because these solutions are not tested for safety, their long-term environmental impact remains unclear. Ingredients of household products can sometimes be more hazardous when mixed. For example, mixing substances like hydrogen peroxide and vinegar produce peracetic/peroxyacetic acid which is highly corrosive and may lead to irritation of skin, eyes, and respiratory system. Additionally, there is no clear guidance on the appropriate storage or disposal of these mixtures, leading to potential risks of poisoning or environmental contamination.

Lack of Instructions & Safety Guidelines

Another concern is that homemade pesticides generally lack the detailed instructions that are provided with commercially available products. The labels on commercial pesticides contain important information, such as safe application methods, recommended dilution ratios, and first-aid steps in case of exposure. Without these guidelines, users are more likely to misuse the product or expose themselves to health risks. This is a critical issue, as improper handling of homemade pesticides can result in chemical burns, inhalation of toxic fumes, or skin irritation. Worse, improperly stored mixtures can be mistaken for food or beverage containers, which has led to several poisoning incidents, particularly among children.

Alternatives to Homemade Pesticides

Rather than relying on potentially harmful or ineffective home remedies, consider alternative pest control methods. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) offers a more sustainable approach, using a combination of biological, physical, and cultural practices to manage pest populations. For example, encouraging natural predators like ladybugs can help control aphids, while maintaining a healthy garden environment can naturally discourage pests. When pest problems arise, it's important to carefully evaluate your options and consider professional pest control products or services that are safe, legal, and effective. Though homemade remedies may seem like a cost-saving, natural solution, they come with risks that may outweigh the benefits.

Conclusion

While homemade pesticides may seem like an appealing, natural alternative to chemical pesticides, they carry significant risks, both in terms of safety and legality. Homemade mixtures are often unregulated, untested, and may be harmful to humans, pets, and the environment. If you're considering using a homemade pesticide, it's essential to understand the legal implications, risks, and potential harm involved. Instead of relying on unproven remedies, it may be more prudent to seek out safer, scientifically validated pest control solutions, such as those available through professional services or well-researched commercial products. When in doubt, always prioritize safety and compliance with local regulations to ensure the well-being of your household and the environment.

Don't Chase Price per Pound at the Expense of Value per Head

Dr. Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky

Over the last few months, I have been able to talk with a lot of cattle producers at Extension programs. As you can imagine, the strength of the cattle market is almost always the first topic of discussion. We are seeing prices like we have never seen before for cattle of all types and weights. But my observation has been that producers tend to become a bit more enamored than they should with price per pound and sometimes don't think as much as they should about value per head.

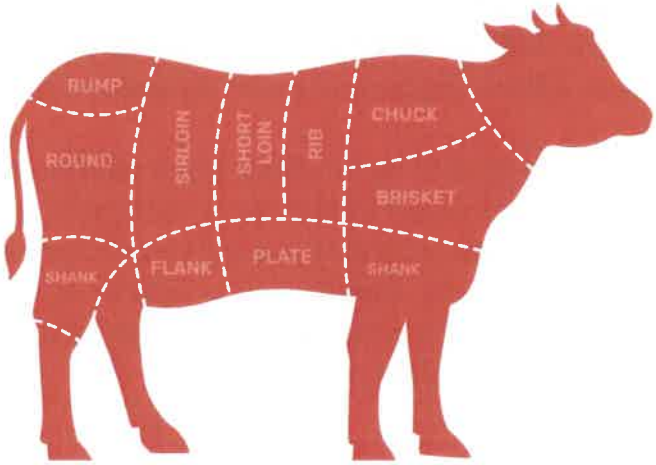
I see this play itself out in a couple ways. First, I hear some producers talk about selling cattle sooner to capture the higher prices. I don't necessarily think that downside price risk is greater in high priced markets, but I think there is a perception among some that there may be "more to lose". This perception lowers interest in adding value to cattle by taking them to higher weight before sale and leads to more calves being sold off the cow, as opposed to being weaned and preconditioned.

Secondly, I think people get too focused on price per pound differences across weight categories and don't make the mental adjustment to the new price environment. To illustrate this point, I am going to use Kentucky average auction prices from the last week of March. The table below shows the average price for medium / large frame #1-2 steers at 450 lbs, 550 lbs, and 650 lbs. For transparency, I am using the average prices for cattle without a description (not value-added or fancy), which represents most cattle being sold. Also, I am averaging the 50 lb weight ranges to arrive at my average price. In other words, the estimated price per lb for a 450 lb steer is the average of the 400 to 450 lb and 450 to 500 lb weight ranges.

Examine the average prices from Kentucky last week in the table for 450 and 550 lb steers. The price per pound drops by $0.50 on that 100 lb increase in weight. If one looks solely at price per lb, they may be tempted to sell calves sooner and avoid the $0.50 slide. However, in this cattle price environment, those 550 lb steers were still worth $113 per head more than the 450 lb steers. The relevant question becomes whether that difference justifies keeping those 450 lb steers longer. In many cases, the answer to that question may be yes, especially in the spring with pasture starting to grow.

To be fair, cattle prices are extremely high by historical standards. Price slides widen as the overall market gets higher and we have never seen a calf market this high. What may have seemed like a bizarre price slide a few years ago, may make perfect sense now. For example, if 450 lb steers were selling for $2 per lb and we applied the same $0.50 price slide for 550 lb steer, that 550 lb steer at $1.50 per lb is actually worth $75 less than the 450 lb steer at $2. But that is irrelevant in the current market.

The main point is that the spring 2025 feeder cattle price environment is like nothing we have seen before. Given that, we must be careful about using rules of thumb and simple approaches that may have worked in the past. Focusing on price per lb, without consideration of weight impacts, can be very misleading. And one needs to be careful they aren't chasing price per lb at the expense of value per head!



Spring Calving Cow Herd Timely Tips

· Watch cows and calves closely. Work hard to save every calf. Calves can be identified with an ear tag while they are young and easy to handle. Commercial male calves should be castrated and implanted. Registered calves should be weighed at birth.
· Cows that have calved need to be on an adequate nutritional level to rebreed. Increase their feed after calving. Do not let them lose their body condition. Keep feeding them until pastures are adequate.
· Do not "rush to grass" although it can be really tempting. Be sure that grass has accumulated enough growth to support the cow's nutritional needs before depending solely upon it. Cows may walk the pastures looking for green grass instead of eating dry feed. This lush, watery grass is not adequate to support them. Keep them consuming dry feed until sufficient grass is available to sustain body condition. We've spent too much money keeping them in good condition to lose it now!
· Prevent grass tetany! Provide magnesium in the mineral mix until daytime temperatures are consistently above 60oF. Mineral supplements should always be available and contain a minimum of about 14% magnesium. Make sure that your mineral mix also contains adequate selenium, copper, and zinc. You can ask your feed dealer about the UK Beef IRM High Magnesium Mineral.
· Make final selection of heifer replacements. Strongly consider vaccinating with a modified-live BVD vaccine.
· Purchase replacement bulls at least 30 days before the breeding season starts. Have herd bulls evaluated for breeding soundness (10-20% of bulls are questionable or unsatisfactory breeders). Get all bulls in proper condition (BCS 6) for breeding.
· If you are going to use artificial insemination and/or estrous synchronization, make plans now and order needed supplies, semen, and schedule a technician.
· Pre-breeding or "turnout" working is usually scheduled for late April or May between the end of calving season and before the start of the breeding season (while cows are open). Consult your veterinarian about vaccines and health products your herd needs. Decide now on the products needed and have handling facilities in good working order. Dehorn commercial calves before going to pasture.

General

· We have made a muddy mess this winter, so be prepared to reseed the bare spots. Our forage group has some excellent information on restoring heavy traffic areas.
· Make plans to improve hay feeding areas to avoid muddy conditions like we have faced this winter. Consider geotextile fabric with gravel or concrete feeding pads.
· Prepare for the grazing season. Check fences and make necessary repairs. Check your corral, too.
· Get everything ready to make high quality hay in May! Have equipment serviced and spare parts on hand. Order baler twine now. Be prepared to harvest an adequate supply of hay when you have the opportunity. Re-supply the extra hay that you fed out of the barn. This past winter caused most producers to exhaust their hay supply, so it is time to re-stock.
· Plan now for fly control ... decide what fly control program that you will use but do not put insecticide ear tags on cattle until fly population appears.

Periodical Cicada Emergence & Fruit Production

I saw my first 17-year cicada 34 years ago, which means the ones coming out next month across much of Kentucky are the 'grandchildren' of those. The numbers for the different broods of the periodical cicada are based on the year that they emerge and whether they are 13- or 17-year cicadas. What we will experience next month will be the most widespread emergence of the broods occurring in the state.

Potential Damage

While a cicada emergence is truly an amazing experience for many, it can be very damaging to some crops like fruit trees, particularly young trees. The damage is done by the female during egg laying. She uses her egg-layer (ovipositor) to tear 1/3-inch slits into pencil thick limbs. She may make a dozen or more of these in a row, then in each of the slits she can lay a dozen or more eggs. These limbs are weakened and often crack and droop or break off entirely from the tree. This damage can disfigure young trees. After about 5 to 6 weeks, the eggs hatch and the nymphs drop to the ground where they tunnel through the soil in search of roots to feed on for the next 16 and a half years.

Monitor & Manage

Growers east of Hopkinsville and Henderson to the Virginia/West Virginia state line will need to monitor their trees and vines through May and watch for the cicadas gathering or any evidence of egg laying damage. There is a good chance that cicadas will not cause a problem with any one specific orchard as they usually gather within pockets in a county, but they will attack apples, peaches, grapes, and other fruit trees. Preventive sprays are not recommended as cicadas don't occur everywhere. There is usually a 10-day or so window after emergence before they begin laying eggs, so there is a wide opportunity to monitor and treat as needed. Of the sprays available, the pyrethroids appear to be the most effective, but Sevin is also good. Be sure to read the label and match the correct insecticide with the type of tree needing treatment.

On apples, try to limit the use of pyrethroids due to their toxicity to European red mite and wooly apple aphid predators and their long-residual activity. However, when periodical cicada populations are excessive, many growers have made the decision to use a pyrethroid to prevent limb damage at the risk of triggering mite problems. The last time this brood emerged, one grower noted that he used a pyrethroid and fought mites the next 2 years, but he felt that he made the correct decision with the large numbers of cicadas that emerged in his orchard. Sevin (carbaryl version), when used early in the growing season (within 30 days of petal fall), has the potential to thin the fruit; it is used as a thinner during this period. Use caution as the rate used to control insects is greater than the rate used to thin apples.

By Ric Bessin, Entomology Extension Specialist

Cooperative Extension Service

Webinar Event

Living with Alpha-gal Syndrome

Learn more about AGS (red meat allergy) and how to reduce your risk with University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension

Topics Covered

- AGS basics
- Tick bite prevention
- Diet & lifestyle management
- Q/A session

Owsley County Extension Office
92 Industrial Park Road
Booneville, KY 41314(606) 593-5109
Thursday, May 29, 2025
7:00 - 8:30p.m.

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

Lexington, KY 40506

10 Backyard Chicken Basics

Source: Jacquie Jacob, Extension Poultry Project Manager

Having a small chicken flock in the backyard is very popular these days. To have a successful flock producing eggs for your family, you'll want to learn the basics.

Make sure you check your local city and county ordinances to ensure you're able to have a backyard flock. Some ordinances require a minimum amount of land and some subdivisions and homeowners' associations have their own rules.

Chickens require daily care. You must feed them, provide clean water and collect eggs every single day. Managing a small flock is an excellent opportunity to teach children a certain amount of responsibility, but ultimately, you'll oversee the health and well-being of your flock.

Birds get sick and it may be difficult to find a veterinarian to provide care for them.

Cleanliness and sanitation are critical elements in caring for a small flock. Everyone must wash their hands before and after handling the birds. Also, no matter how tempting, avoid bringing your chickens into the house and don't use your kitchen sink to wash equipment.

Poop happens. Chickens eat a lot and hens use about 60% of the feed they consume and excrete the other 40% as manure. You must have a plan for that manure. One option is adding it as an odor-free fertilizer for your home garden.

Keep it down. Chickens make noise. Only roosters crow, however, hens are not always quiet and can make a lot of noise letting everyone know they just laid an egg.

The egg season will come to an end. Chickens stop producing eggs at some point in their lives and may live a long time beyond their egg-laying years. Have a plan for what you will do with hens that stop producing. If you keep them as pets, you'll have to keep feeding them and providing other resources for their care.

Housing is a big part of keeping a flock. Your birds will need a house that provides shelter from the weather, next boxes for egg laying and perches for roosting at night. Make sure housing is easy to clean and provides protection from predators. You'll have to manage their bedding well to prevent rodents from making your chickens' house their home.

Scratch that. Chickens scratch when they forage. If you let hens run free, you may need to place a fence around your garden if you don't want the birds to destroy it.

Know how to get chicks. You will most likely want to raise your hens from chicks. You can buy them online and have them shipped to your home, but some suppliers have minimum quantities for orders. You may have neighbors or friends who also raise chickens willing to join you in an order. Remember you'll need to provide new chicks with a heat source, such as a lamp, for at least six weeks.

For more information about small flocks, visit https://afs.ca.uky.edu/poultry/poultry-publications or contact the Owsley Cooperative Extension Service at (606) 593-5109.

Cooperative Extension Service

Owsley County Extension Service
PO Box 186
Booneville, KY 41314
Return Service Requested