



Robertson County
Agriculture &
Natural Resources
Newsletter
November
2024

Pest-Proofing Your Home

By Zachary DeVries, Entomology Extension Specialist

Many pests seek refuge in homes and buildings in response to changes in weather, such as extended periods of rain or drought, or the onset of cool autumn temperatures. In response to these pest invasions, homeowners often apply liberal amounts of insecticides indoors. Although indoor insecticide application often provides quick results for the pests you see, this strategy is generally ineffective at providing a long-term solution because most of the pests being treated are coming in from outside the home. Therefore, to ensure a pest-free home, it is important that residents focus their attention towards denying pest entry before they make their way indoors, a process better known as “pest-proofing”.

Outlined below are six tips for pest-proofing one’s home or business. The suggestions in the first three bullets will also conserve energy and increase the comfort level during winter and summer. Equipment and materials can be purchased at most hardware or home improvement stores.

- **Install door sweeps or thresholds at the base of all exterior entry doors.** Lie on the floor and check for light visible under doors. Gaps of 1/16 inch or less will permit entry of insects and spiders; 1/4-inch-wide gaps (about the diameter of a pencil) are large enough for entry of mice; 1/2-inch gaps are adequate for rats. Pay particular attention to the bottom corners as this is often where rodents and insects enter. Garage doors should be fitted with a bottom seal constructed of rubber (vinyl seals poorly in cold weather). Gaps under sliding glass doors can be sealed by lining the bottom track with 1/2- to 3/4-inch-wide foam weather stripping. Apply sealant (see “Seal cracks” below) along bottom outside edge and sides of door thresholds to exclude ants and other small insects.
- **Seal utility openings where pipes and wires enter the foundation and siding, such as around outdoor faucets, receptacles, gas meters, clothes dryer vents, and telephone/cable TV wires.** These are common entry points for ants, spiders, wasps, rodents, and other pests. Holes can be plugged with mortar, caulk, urethane expandable foam, copper mesh (like the material in pot scrubbers), or other suitable sealant.
- **Seal cracks around windows, doors, fascia boards, etc.** Use a good quality silicone or acrylic latex caulk/sealant. Although somewhat less flexible than pure silicone, latex-type caulks clean up easily with water and can be painted. Caulks that dry clear are often easier to use than pigmented caulks since they don’t show mistakes. Buy a good caulking gun; features to look for include a back-off trigger to halt the flow of caulk when desired, a built-in ‘slicer’ for cutting the tip off of new caulking tubes, and a nail for puncturing the seal within. Prior to sealing, cracks should be cleaned and any peeling caulk removed to aid adhesion. For a professional look, smooth the bead of caulk with a damp rag or a moistened finger after application. A key area to caulk on the inside of basements is along the top of the foundation wall where the wooden sill plate is attached to the concrete foundation. Ants, spiders, and other pests often enter through the resulting crack.
- **Repair gaps and tears in window and door screens.** Doing so will help reduce entry of flies, gnats, mosquitoes, and midges during summer, and cluster flies, lady beetles, and other overwintering pests in autumn. Certain insects are small enough to fit through standard mesh window screen. The only way to deny entry of these tiny insects is to keep windows closed during periods of adult fall emergence.
- **Install 1/4-inch wire mesh (hardware cloth) over attic, roof, and crawl space vents in order to prevent entry of birds, bats, squirrels, rodents, and other wildlife.** Be sure to wear gloves when cutting and installing hardware cloth as the wire edges are razor-sharp. Backing the wire mesh from the inside with screening will further help to prevent insects such as ladybugs, paper wasps and yellowjackets. If not already present, invest in a chimney cap to exclude birds, squirrels, raccoons, and other nuisance wildlife. Raccoons, in particular, are a serious problem throughout Kentucky. Many chimneys become home to a family of raccoons which, in turn, are often infested with fleas.
- **Consider applying an exterior (barrier) insecticide treatment.** While sealing is the more permanent way to exclude pests originating from outdoors, comprehensive pest-proofing is laborious and sometimes impractical. For clients needing an alternative, pest-proofing can be supplemented by an exterior treatment with an insecticide. Homeowners will get the most for their efforts by applying longer-lasting liquid formulations containing pyrethroids (e.g., cypermethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, Gamma-Cyhalothrin, etc.). Such products are sold at hardware and lawn and garden shops. For better coverage, it’s often best to purchase these products as concentrates so that they can be diluted and applied with a pump up sprayer, hose end sprayer, etc. Treat at the base of all exterior doors, garage and crawl space entrances, around foundation vents and utility openings, and up underneath siding. It also may be useful to treat around the outside perimeter of the foundation. Be sure to follow all label instructions, and use this information only as general guidance. Clients who choose not to tackle these activities may want to hire a professional pest control firm, many of which offer pest-proofing services.

Reviving Drought Stressed Pastures

Dr. Chris D. Teutsch, UK Grain and Forage Center of Excellence, Princeton, KY

A very hot and dry early summer combined with overgrazing has significantly reduced pasture growth and vigor in many areas of Kentucky. The good news is that drought stressed pastures often look worse than they really are. This is especially true for pastures that were well managed prior to drought. In many cases pastures can be revived without reseeding. The key element is rainfall. On the flipside, pastures that have been grazed closely and continuously prior to drought often do not fare as well during and after drought. The following are some considerations for reviving drought stressed pastures.

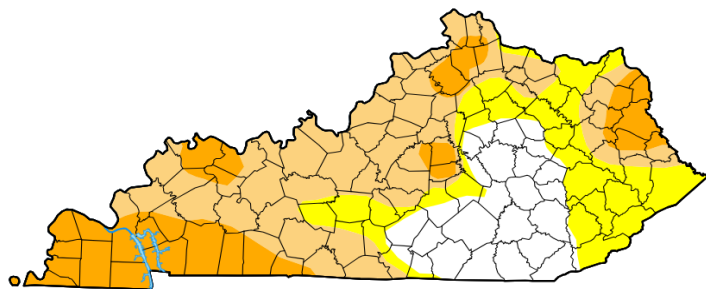


Figure 1. As of July 5, 2022, more than 78% of Kentucky was experiencing abnormally dry (yellow) to moderate drought stress (tan) (The National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE).

Rest pastures during and after drought. Close the gates! The worst possible thing that we can do during and after a drought is to allow live-stock access to all the pastures. During a drought, confining animals to one pasture and feeding hay limits damage to a single pasture and allows the other pastures to adapt to the drought stress. Following a drought, it is important to keep those animals confined to the sacrifice while other pastures recover. This allows pasture plants to rebuild their photosynthetic factory (leaf canopy) and store up sugars and carbohydrates before the winter months. The stockpiled growth that accumulates during this recovery period can then be used for grazing during the winter months after plants have gone dormant.

Fertilize pastures according to soil test. Fertilizing pastures this fall can help to strengthen plants and get them ready to grow next spring. Adjust the soil pH to 6.0 to 6.4, apply phosphorus and potassium according to your soil test, and apply 60-80 lb nitrogen/A in mid-August to mid-September for stockpiling. Alternatively, a smaller amount of nitrogen (30 to 40 lb/A) in November or early December can be applied (see last month's article). This late-season nitrogen application will not produce a great deal of fall growth, but it will stimulate tiller production and root growth. Pasture growth will start earlier in the spring stands will be thicker.

Interseed legumes into thin stands. Legumes such as red and white clover, and alfalfa are important components of sustainable grassland ecosystems. They form a symbiotic relationship with rhizobium bacteria in which nitrogen from the air is fixed into a plant available form. They also dilute the toxin in tall fescue infected with the toxic endophyte and in some cases may even reverse the negative effects of the endophyte. Pasture sod suppressed by drought and overgrazing provide a perfect opportunity for interseeding clover and alfalfa. Legumes can be either drilled in the fall or spring or frost seeded in late winter. Frost seeding works best with red and white clover and annual lespedeza. Alfalfa is better established using a no-till drill. For more information on selecting varieties and overseeding contact your local extension agent or visit the UK Forages Webpage at <http://forages.ca.uky.edu/>.

Plant winter annuals. In some cases, drilling cool-season annuals, such as small grains, annual ryegrass, and brassicas into dormant sods can be cost effective. In this situation, sods are normally in very poor condition and there are simply not enough remaining plants to actively compete with the cool-season annuals. However, interseeding cool-season annuals into a dormant sod that was well managed prior to the drought does not normally work as well as expected. This is due to the fact that the ground is very dry and when the rain finally comes the seed not only starts to germinate and grow, but so does the dormant sod. An established fescue sod has an extensive root system that competes well for limited moisture. On the other hand, newly established seedlings have a very small root system and are at a serious disadvantage when competing for water and light with an established fescue sod. The best place for cool-season annuals is on cropland or areas that had summer annuals that has already been harvested or grazed. In general production on these areas will be greater due to the absence competition. In order to optimize late fall and early winter production, these mixtures should be seeded in mid to late-August, given soil moisture is adequate for germination and emergence.

Include brassicas in mixture. Rape and turnips can be planted in late summer to provide late fall and early winter grazing. All brassicas require well-drained, fertile soils and a near neutral pH for optimum production. Strip grazing is needed to maximize utilization of brassicas. Brassicas can be 90% digestible and can cause health disorders if not properly managed. Problems can be avoided by following several commonsense recommendations: 1) introduce animals to brassica pastures slowly, 2) never turn hungry animals that are not adapted into brassica pastures, 3) brassicas should not make up more 75% of diet, and 4) plant a mixture of brassicas and cool season annual grasses, 5) allow access to grass pasture or dry hay at all times.

Late planted summer annual can provide emergency forage. Pearl millet can be planted in mid to late summer, given adequate soil moisture. The yield potential will be less than earlier plantings, but they could yield in the range of 1-2 ton/A. Since the planting time is not ideal, use the higher end of the recommended seeding rates, 40-50 lb/A for sorghum-sudangrass and 20-25 lb/A for the pearl millet. Graze at 20 inches and harvest at 40 inches.

It is important to remember that drought alone rarely kills well managed pasture plants. In most cases pastures can be revived with rain, rest, and a little fertilizer. Weakened sods provide a prime opportunity for incorporating legumes in established pastureland. With a little tender loving care and rainfall this year's drought stressed pastures will be next year's green meadows.

Robertson County Deer Harvest 2024



What: This is a program designed to help farmers and landowners thin down the population of deer in our county and surrounding counties by giving them a place to donate their legally harvested deer (doe or buck)

Why: This will help control the number of deer in our area while also giving back by supplying our local food banks with ground venison.

When: *The following times are when there will be volunteers at the Ag Barn to accept donated deer*

⇒ **Saturday, November 16th 9:00 AM—12:00 PM and 5:00 PM—7:00 PM**

⇒ **Sunday, November 17th 9:00 AM—12:00 PM**

Where: Robertson County Ag Barn (Located behind Robertson County School)
1760 Sardis Rd. Mt. Olivet, KY 41064

We will only accept deer that has been harvested on these days, that are the whole deer, field dressed with the skin on. If the temperature is warm, use a bag of ice to protect the meat. No deer will be accepted that does not meet food safety standards.

Confirmation number must be presented upon arrival

****Deer harvested in surrounding counties will be accepted****

If you need to reach someone during the event, please call 606-842-0100

People who donate a deer will be entered into a drawing for various door prizes

If you would like to volunteer, please reach out to Harley Flack or Jeremy McCloud

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Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

The 3 Ps of Herd Expansion: Profit, Pasture and Patience

By: *Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky*

As I write this article in early October, beef cow inventory is at a 62 year low. Tight supplies have driven cattle markets and calf prices have increased by roughly \$1 per lb over the last two years. With limited heifer retention and beef cow slaughter on track to exceed 10% of beef cow inventory for the year, it appears very likely that beef cow numbers will be even lower going into 2025. At some point, we will expand this cowherd but there appears to be little evidence that producers have an appetite for that currently. In order for the cow herd to grow, we need to have the 3 Ps of herd expansion at the cow-calf level: profit, pasture and patience.

The first P is probably the most obvious – profit. There will be no interest in cowherd expansion if money is not being made at the cow-calf level. While profit has largely been there recently, it is important to remember that these strong calf price levels are relatively new. We actually went from November 2015 to February 2023 (7 years and 4 months) with the state average price of a 550 lb medium / large frame #1-2 steer in Kentucky being under \$2 per lb. Coming out of that challenging 7-year period, I think a lot of cow-calf operators have been cautious and guarded. Just as importantly, a lot of costs are substantially higher now than they were ten years ago, so comparing current calf prices to historical calf prices can be misleading. Still, I think current returns at the cow-calf level are sufficient to see heifer retention if the other two Ps fall into place.

The second P is pasture, and I am using pasture broadly to describe forage / feed availability. While profit may be the first driver of expansion, no level of profit can make it rain and limited pasture and hay supplies can nix any interest in expansion in a hurry. As a recent example, drought was so widespread in the US during 2022 that expansion would have been highly unlikely, regardless of calf price levels. Both hay supplies and pasture and range conditions have improved since 2022, but a lot of areas have been dry this year, including my home state of Kentucky. Regardless, there is no doubt that both profit and pasture / hay are needed in order to see a significant interest in expansion.

The final P is patience, and I actually think this may be the one that is most lacking in the cattle industry right now. When a farmer decides to expand the size of their cowherd, they are trading income from the sale of heifers today for a stream of income from additional calf sales in the future. Weaned heifers are valuable in 2024 and passing up that income in the short run is difficult. Developing heifers is also costly and is an expense that is incurred well before additional calves can be sold. These same factors were largely present when our last expansion began in 2015, but interest rates were considerably lower than they are today. Higher interest rates increase cost of production and also increase the preference for income today, rather than in the future. Put another way, patience is at a premium in higher interest rate environments like the present.

At some point, the three Ps will line up and we will expand this cowherd. When that will happen is a difficult question to answer, but it is safe to say there are no signs of heifer retention right now. Limited heifer retention, combined with cow slaughter levels, suggest that another decrease in beef cow inventory is almost certain when the January 2025 estimates are released. So, supply fundamentals are encouraging and should continue to support calf prices next year. Many are also expecting some reductions in interest rates over the several months, which may factor into this decision at the producer level.

If weather cooperates, I do think increased heifer retention could be seen in 2025, but it is important to remember that this would just be the first step towards expansion. And the initial impact of heifer retention is actually a tightening of calf markets as those heifers are held back. There are always risk factors out there, but I remain optimistic about the next couple of years largely because cattle supplies are tight and likely to get tighter. We are not seeing signs up expansion yet, so all we can do is watch for the 3 Ps!



Robertson County Cattlemen's' Association

Annual Meeting

Friday, November 8th

6:00 PM

Robertson County School Cafeteria

Topic:

Pasture Management and Weed Control in a Drought Year

Dwight Leslie,

Kentucky Forage Spokesman



Meal will be provided



This meeting fulfills the CAIP
Education Requirement

Join/Renew your Cattleman's Membership Dues!

Kentucky Cattleman's Membership—\$30/year

Kentucky Cattleman's Couple Membership—Add \$15 to your KCA Membership

Kentucky Junior Cattleman's Membership—We will pay your dues! Just register!

Dues can be brought to the Extension Office or paid at the Annual Meeting

MEMBERSHIP MUST BE RENEWED ANUALLY

DATE	PROGRAM	LOCATION
NOVEMBER 1	NEW/SMALL FARM SERIES	MSU FARM
NOVEMBER 8	ROBERTSON COUNTY CATTLEMEN'S ANNUAL MEETING	ROBERTSON COUNTY SCHOOL
NOVEMBER 16 & 17	ROBERTSON COUNTY DEER HARVEST	AG BARN
NOVEMBER 22	COMMERCIAL PESTICIDE CEU PROGRAM CALL (606)-845-4641 TO REGISTER	ZOOM

Fall nutrient applications has its advantages

Source: John Grove, Plant and Soil Sciences professor

Grain producers can take steps now to prepare for the next growing season. Fall is an ideal time to start by applying nutrients to the soil.

There are several benefits to autumn fertilizing. For one, it can prevent delays in planting come spring. Kentucky's fall weather is generally drier, reducing the risk of soil compaction during application. Additionally, purchasing fertilizer in these cooler months might lead to savings, as spring tends to be the busier season for fertilizer sales.

Before getting started, test your soil to ensure you only apply the nutrients your fields need. This approach saves both time and money. You can coordinate with your local extension office to submit soil samples to the University of Kentucky's regional testing labs.

Once your soil test results are in, follow UK recommendations for fertilizer application. Potash and phosphorus are particularly well-suited for fall application in Kentucky. These nutrients interact with the soil to keep them in place, preventing loss through leaching during the state's typically wet winters. If you're planting small grains this autumn, apply the recommended rates of phosphorus and potash before planting. Double-crop producers should also account for soybean nutrient needs when applying fall wheat fertilizer.

UK encourages corn and full-season soybean producers to wait until the springtime to apply nitrogen and animal manures. Both run a high risk of leaching from the soil during the winter. Additionally, nitrogen losses can occur from denitrification and immobilization during the winter. Animal manures are most effective when there is a crop already growing in the field.

If you've planted wheat this fall, apply just enough nitrogen to promote early growth and tillering, usually no more than 40 pounds per acre. Wheat-following crops like soybeans, tobacco or well-fertilized corn may not need additional nitrogen in the fall. If more nitrogen is required, remember that common phosphorus fertilizers in Kentucky, such as DAP (18-46-0) and MAP (11-52-0), also supply nitrogen that the wheat can utilize.

Apple Pie Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 2 cored and sliced apples (or 1 cup unsweetened applesauce)
- 1 medium banana (fresh or frozen)
- 1/4 cup rolled oats
- 1 1/2 cups skim milk
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3-4 ice cubes
- 1 teaspoon honey (optional)

Directions:

1. Put everything in the blende and blend until smooth.
2. Enjoy!



Robertson Conservation—Equipment Rental

⇒ No-till Drill (Hay Buster)

\$65/day, 1-10 acres

\$65 + \$6.50/acre, 11 acres and up

⇒ Lime Spreader

\$50/day

***NEW* \$100 check deposit is required upon pick-up of equipment**

Contact Grant Paynter to schedule: (606)-842-0320

Soil Samples

First 10 Soil Samples are free!

\$10 deposit on soil probe

Hay Samples

\$10 (Check) /sample

For more information call the

Extension Office at (606)-724-5796

****We do free samples for the East KY Hay Contest in the fall. If you could like to be added to the list for sampling, please call the office.**

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 Cooperative Extension Service

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Fall is in the air with the cooler weather that we have been having here lately. I hope that everyone is wrapping up their harvest for the year and preparing for the winter months ahead. Just a few reminders of upcoming meetings/programs that will be taking place in November:

- ⇒ Robertson County Cattlemen's Annual Meeting—
November 8th @ 6:00 PM
- ⇒ Robertson County Deer Harvest—
November 16th & 17th

Remember that you can pay your Cattlemen's Dues at the Annual meeting, or by stopping in at the Extension Office whenever you are in town.

Please make note of the dates that the Extension Office will be closed for various holidays here in the upcoming months.

Just a reminder that I will be going on maternity leave here shortly. Hopefully everyone has their CAIP education completed for the current program year, if not call the office and they will get you in touch with the correct people.



Samantha Saunders
Robertson County Agriculture & Natural Resources/
4-H Youth Development Agent



The Robertson County Extension Office will be closed on the following dates:

- November 5—Presidential Election**
- November 28—29—Thanksgiving**
- December 25-January 1—Christmas Holiday and New Years Day**
- January 20—MLK Jr. Day**

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University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating.
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