The Weekend Farmer

e-Newsletter for Small Farm Producers in Southwest Wisconsin

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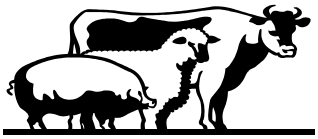
In This Issue:



Livestock Lessons:

Producing Poultry on Pasture – *Adam Hady - Agriculture Agent, Richland County UWEX.* Thinking about pastures poultry? Take a quick look at some of the questions to ask before you get started.

Thistle Management: A Prickly Issue!
Rhonda Gildersleeve - Agriculture Agent, Iowa County UWEX. Thistle problems? Do you know your enemy? This article will take you through the basics of thistle identification and control.

Money & Markets

Keeping Track and Moving Forward – *Adam Hady - Agriculture Agent, Richland County UWEX.* A look at record keeping and making management decisions from them.

HORTICULTURE HINTS

Deer Resistant Plants for the Rural Landscape - *Dan Brandt, Horticulture Intern, Iowa County UWEX.* Dan provides considerations for your next landscape project that won't go to the deer.

Livestock Lessons

Producing Poultry on Pasture
A Quick Overview

Adam Hady
Richland County Agriculture Agent

Pastured poultry is a system of raising poultry for meat on a pasture management system. Utilizing this type of management system has many benefits for limited resource producers and for home production of poultry.

Pros to Pastured Poultry

- Low capital investment
- It is a production system that can start small and grow.
- Can be a one person operation
- Potential for extra income
- Increased soil fertility
- Strong consumer demand
- Provides a production system that the kids can be involved in.

Cons to Pastured Poultry

- Susceptible to predators
- Susceptible to weather
- Pasturing is seasonal
- Requires daily labor, intensive labor if home processing.
- Few processing facilities – Currently only two State inspected plants in Wisconsin

Pastured Poultry Systems

The moveable pen system of pastured poultry is most common system used for growing broilers. In this system, groups of approximately 75-100 birds at about 3-5 weeks of age are put in movable growing pens. These pens are usually floorless pens that are moved once or twice a day. This system allows the birds to have fresh vegetation every day, and under proper management can reduce problems with diseases such as coccidiosis.

There are many pen designs available to producers. When choosing a pen design, you should take into consideration the following factors:

Is the pen easy to move? Pens will need to be moved so choose a design that will be light weight and easy to handle.

Durability - How will the pen hold up to weather elements? Wind, heat and cold are the major weather elements to consider when looking at a pen design.

Access to the Pen - Pen design should be so that the producer can easily and efficiently access the pen for chores.

Cost/ Construction - The pen should be one that is easily put together and from materials that are relatively inexpensive.

Protection from Predators – Predation is the main disadvantage to pastured poultry. Choose a pen design that would discourage predators.

Breeds

There are many different breeds of chicken available so which breeds will work best? Economically, the commercial meat strains have an advantage in growth rate and feed efficiency. The commercial meat bird is a crossbred bird that started by using genetics from the breeds Cornish and Rock, thus giving them the name of Cornish Cross or Cornish Rock. These birds will reach market weight on pasture at about 8-10 weeks.

Other breeds such as Rhode Island Reds and the Plymouth Rock are popular in small farm situations. These birds are used both for meat and eggs, and are known as dual purpose breeds. The disadvantage to these birds in a meat production system is that they are not as efficient as the commercial bird; therefore will not reach market weight as soon.

Feed Requirements

Chickens will consume some of the grass on pasture. However, this is a small percentage of the diet. Therefore, a large portion of the diet in pastured poultry system comes from concentrates. There are many commercial feed mixes available. These mixes are made from corn, soybean meal, and are supplemented with premixes of minerals and vitamins. Be sure to read all feed labels. Commercial feeds are sold as medicated or non-medicated. This could have consequences on how you are able to label your birds for market.

Other Resources:

The American Pastured Poultry Producers Association, http://www.apppa.org

Range Poultry Housing, ATTRA. http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/poulthous.pdf

Raising Poultry on Pasture, UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, Research Brief #57

Raising Pastured Poultry, Cornell University Extension, 10/7/05

THISTLE MANAGEMENT: A PRICKLY ISSUE!

Rhonda Gildersleeve, Iowa County Agriculture Agent

During summer, thistles are a common sight throughout southwest Wisconsin in pastures, roadsides, and CRP land and a popular question from landowners is: *"How do I control thistles???"*

First, let's talk biology! It is important to understand that different thistle species (as well as other weeds) have different life cycles, and this information is critical to your management approach since some weeds are more difficult to control due to longevity and multiple means of spread.

Here are the life cycle categories of weeds:

- **Annuals:** Complete life cycle in 12 months or less and only produce new plants by seeds; *example:* **annual sowthistle**. Mowing is often used for control of annual weeds to reduce seed production.
- **Biennials:** Require 2 years to produce seed and die; first year is "rosette" stage and requires cold temperatures to shift to reproductive growth the next year; *examples:* **bull, musk and plumeless thistles.**
- **Perennials:** Regrow each year from roots or crown buds and lives indefinitely; *example:* **Canada thistle.**

Next, make sure you know which thistle you are controlling! Here are some key characteristics of thistles found in southwest Wisconsin:

Bull Thistle

- Leaves deeply cut, with a wrinkled gray-green surface
- Spines perpendicular to leaf surface, needle-like
- Stem appears spiny;

decurrent leaves (run down along stem)
- Flask shaped flower

Musk Thistle
- Leaves smooth, with gray-green margins and white, hairless mid-rib

- Stem spiny except below the flower head
- **Large** flower (1 ½ to 2 inches across); pink to violet-pink, heads "nod"

Plumeless Thistle
- Leaves are deeply divided and hairy, especially lower surface midrib

- Leaf lobes are often at an angle to midrib
- Stems spiny from base to tip
- Pink flower is ¾ to 1 inch across

Canada Thistle

- Roots deep and branched (rhizomes)
- Leaves with crinkled, spiny edges
- Small pink-purple flowers, flask shaped, ¾ inch across
- **Grows in patches** due to rhizomes (spreads by roots)
- Male and female flowers on separate heads and plants

Key Points for Managing Thistles

Start by taking an inventory of the major weed species on your land and note the locations of infestations so that you can check on weed regrowth or species' changes following control in the season applied as well as several times annually thereafter. Keeping track of weedy areas over time is the best way to monitor effectiveness as well as make progress in weed control.

Prior to using an herbicide, always read the product label and apply according to label directions. For pastures, be sure to observe appropriate livestock withdrawal times once herbicides are applied. More specific guidelines for bull, plumeless, musk and Canada thistles control are given below. **These guidelines are not an endorsement of particular products over other similar products in the marketplace.** If you have additional questions regarding thistle control options, please call your local UW Extension office.

Canada Thistle Management

Because Canada thistle is a perennial species and has an extensive rhizome root system, it is much more difficult to control than the other thistles growing in southwest Wisconsin and infestations require a long term strategy for control. While mowing will temporarily set Canada thistle back, it would require mowing several times throughout the summer to expect even modest control, so in most cases, herbicides are a more effective option. For most effective use, time herbicide applications for bud to early flowering stages. There are several herbicides to choose from:
- **Clopyralid ('Stinger')** is currently the herbicide of choice since it is very effective on Canada thistle; also quite expensive
- **'Curtail' ('Stinger' + 2, 4-D)** is more economical alternative that has good effectiveness
- **Aminopyralid ('Milestone')** is a new herbicide formulation that is also very effective on Canada thistle. This herbicide is also available **mixed with 2, 4-D ('Forefront').**
- **Dicamba + 2, 4-D ('Weedmaster', 'Brash')** is very economical, but is less effective as a long term control method for Canada thistle.
- **Glyphosate ('Roundup')** is very effective against Canada thistle, but is non-selective and will harm adjacent non-target plants,

so this option is recommended only when taking out a pasture or CRP and/or rotating to a crop such as corn or alfalfa.

Biennial Thistle Management

The key to long-term control of biennial thistles (bull, plumeless or musk) is preventing seed production. The best results occur when biennials are treated during their first growing season when they are in the rosette stage, any time between germination and up to "bolting" (emergence of flowers) in their second year. This provides flexible control, and fall applications are ideal because:

- All plants of concern are in the rosette stage
- Herbicide is more actively moved into crown & roots
- A less hectic time of year, so spraying is more likely to get done

Once bolting occurs, mowing to prevent seed development is the best control option as biennials become somewhat resistant to herbicides at this stage of their life cycle.

What to Use for Biennial Thistles?

Herbicide mixtures of dicamba + 2, 4-D ('Weedmaster', 'Brash') are very effective and also make the most economic sense. This combination will also control a number of other troublesome biennial weeds as well, such as burdock, wild parsnip, and wild carrot.

Glyphosate may be useful in a few situations where biennial thistles have completely taken over, but use caution since glyphosate is non-selective (will kill all plants sprayed). Where appropriate, apply glyphosate to these areas using a backpack sprayer with a single nozzle and aim only for the rosette center (no need to treat entire plant).

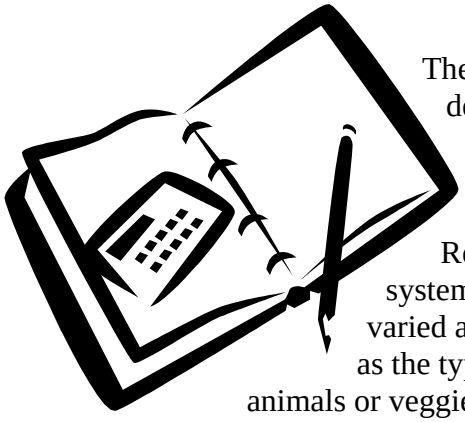
Keeping Track and Moving Forward

Adam Hady, Richland County Agriculture Agent

Record keeping is one of those boring jobs that we need to train ourselves to do on any production setting. There is a large benefit to knowing what we have done and are we or are we not moving forward in our operations.

There are many reasons that we want to keep records. The first reason that most people keep records is for the finances. Record keeping is a way to calculate profit or loss and track income and expense for income taxes. Also, records on finances are a way that you can put together financial documents to borrow money or establish credit.

The second reason to keep records would be to track production. By tracking production you will be able to make sound management decisions. Production records when coupled with financial records can make for a sound method to make plans for the future and make necessary adjustments to improve your operation.



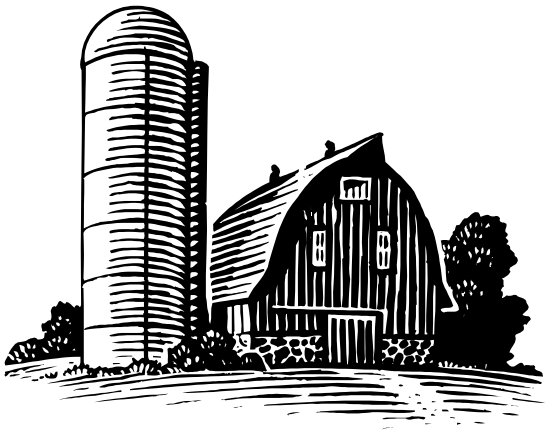
The first step is to develop a record keeping system. Record keeping systems are as varied and abundant as the types of and animals or veggies you can grow. The record system will depend on the complexity of your operation and the skill sets that you have as a manager. Keep the records as simple as you can. If the system gets too complicated for the need, there is an increased chance that there will be mistakes in the record; as the operation becomes more complex, the more complex the record keeping system. For example, if you are only growing tomatoes for the farmers market your record keeping system would be more simplified than if you were raising 20 different veggies.

The next step is to keep track of records of economic importance. These would be factors that influence the money in and out of pocket book. Records of economic importance are pounds of product sold or dollars per unit. Direct costs are also part of your records. For example if you were selling lettuce at the farmers market would keep track of the pounds of lettuce sold and the price sold at for each day and market.

There are production records that allow for future decision making, and can be helpful in making decisions regarding breeding stock, variety selection, expanding or downsizing. With production records we want to be able standardize these records. Record standardization allows you, as the producer, to compare apples to apples. In the livestock area there are adjustment factors and equations. For example weaning weights in beef cattle are adjusted to 205 day weights. This adjustment factor no takes into account the age of the cow, birth weight of the calf, sex of the calf and age of the calf at weaning to get all the calves to an equal playing field. Utilizing these records you can start to track which cows are not producing calves of adequate size and can be used to make culling decisions. Likewise, if we use our lettuce example by tracking price and pounds sold you are better able to track markets that pay more or better plan amount of product to bring.

There are many considerations to record keeping. It can be as simple as a notebook in your pocket or a complex computer spreadsheet. Either way, getting the right information recorded will make tax time easier and lead to better decision making.

Visit UWEX Emerging Markets Team at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets/ for more information on record keeping or contact your local extension office.



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HORTICULTURE HINTS

DEER RESISTANT PLANTS FOR THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

Dan Brandt, Iowa County Extension Horticulture Intern

Deer have been a problem in many parts of the state especially here in southwest Wisconsin. We have deer everywhere you look in this area. From the ones that do not make it crossing the road to the ones you see eating at your plants, deer have become a problem in many residential landscapes also. Everyone loves certain plants, but do your friends from the woods love them as much as you do to? We will look over some methods you can practice to help control deer in your landscape and also look at some plants you can plant that will help deter the deer from your wonderful plants that you both have come to love so much.

There are many methods you can use to help deter deer in your landscapes. First would be to put up a deer fence. This is the most costly of the ideas and also the one that will take up the most time as well. The second idea is to wrap your trees with netting; also you can lay the netting on the ground as well. Deer hate stepping on netting. Sometimes repellents work to deter deer as well.

The most important step to a deer resistant landscape is to plant plants that deer dislike. Try plants such as: coral bells, cosmos, dusty millers, lavender, perennial sages, purple coneflowers, periwinkle, and thyme. For trees try: Bradford pear, red maple, white, pin, and scarlet oak, Douglas fir, northern catalpa, river birch, ginkgo, thorn less honey locust, Japanese tree lilac, white fir, Norway spruce, red pine, and Norway pine. For shrubs try: junipers, mugo pines, spirea, burning bushes, and cotoneasters.

For a list of additional plants, please see the UW-Extensions publication #A3727 on deer resistant plants available through your local county UW Extension Office and UW Publications (http://learningstore.uwex.edu/). Deer for the most part are deterred from these plants, but in some cases deer may still be attracted to these plants in your landscape areas. Also observe neighbor's landscapes and see if they have some plants that attract deer more than others. These are just a few tips to help control deer in your home landscape. Hope these ideas work for you and your garden, and as always happy gardening.

UW Extension