

News Column
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Management Minder, a new calendar tool now available

The Management Minder is a new web-based tool to help develop a yearly production calendar for your cow/calf, replacement heifer or growing calf operation. The timing of many management tasks for a cow/calf operation are dependent on the timing of the start of key activities such as the breeding season(s), spring grazing, and weaning. For example, based on the start of the breeding season, the Minder can remind you when the beginning of the third trimester of pregnancy begins so you can adjust the ration for increased energy needs. Or it may remind you to make arrangements to obtain vaccines in time for processing calves. The Minder contains a list of activities you may want to add to your calendar and a suggested date based on a default interval from the appropriate date category (breeding, weaning, grass turnout, and receiving cattle). The user can then adjust the date to fit their situation.

Users register on the website with a unique farm/ranch name. All other functions in the application are linked to the farm name allowing the program to identify different producers. Once set up, the items from one calendar year can be automatically sent to the next calendar year (thus the need for registration) minimizing the time needed for set up in subsequent years. While the user can only see the activities for their own farm/ranch, the application provides an option to register multiple usernames under the same farm/ranch name. Other family/team members, consultants or veterinarians can be given permission to add items to the same farm/ranch calendar.

Once activities are added to the calendar, a calendar file is sent to the email address associated with the farm/ranch. The program generates an “.ics” file that can be read by Outlook, Google and Yahoo calendars. Depending on the user calendar system, the entire calendar can be shared or the “.ics” files forwarded to other team members. The calendar can be printed and/or be available on mobile devices.

The Minder is a joint effort between Iowa State University and K-State Research and Extension. The development of the technical side of this tool was led by Garland Dahlke at the Iowa Beef Center and his student, Dinesh Poddaturi, a computer programmer working on a masters degree in information systems. We expect that the early users of the program will have suggestions for improvement and may identify issues that still need to be resolved. We welcome and encourage this feedback.

The tool can be found at <http://cowweb.exnet.iastate.edu/CowWeb/faces/>
Send questions and comments regarding the tool to Sandy Johnson, livestock specialist at sandyj@ksu.edu

It's time for topdressing nitrogen on wheat

As we look toward spring one task for some growers is topdressing wheat—there are several things to think about such as timing, nitrogen (N) source, application method and N rate.

Ideally, enough N was applied in the fall to meet the needs of the crop through green-up. With poorly developed wheat in particular, having adequate N available to support spring tillering when it breaks dormancy will be important. Some combination of fall preplant or at-seeding N and/or early topdressed N is also needed to supply adequate N to support head differentiation a little later in the spring. Feeks 5 is the stage when head size is being determined, and this begins about two weeks before jointing.

Feeks 5 occurs in early spring, when wheat plants begin to green up and begin erect growth. Feeks 5 only occurs after vernalization has occurred during the cold/cool winter months. The wheat head size is determined because the number of spikelets are being determined. It's important the N in topdress applications be moved into the root zone with precipitation well before jointing.