

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact Wendie Powell
Livestock Production Agent, Wildcat Extension District
wendiepowell@ksu.edu, (620) 784-5337

Small Scale Livestock Production

Have a few acres and looking for a way to mow the grass without a lawn mower? Is raising a few head of livestock something you're interested in? There are lots of options for small scale or backyard livestock production.

Matching the animal to the resources you have is step one. Previous experience or knowledge could be the highest priority resource, or maybe viewing your available acreage and forage, along with fencing, could help determine your options. The smaller the animal, the more individuals you can stock. It all depends on the available forage and the nutrient requirement of each animal. In Kansas, livestock owners are required to fence in their livestock. Of course, each species has slightly different fencing needs. Consider the old adage, "fences need to be horse high, pig tight, and bull strong."

Along with pairing the livestock species to the resources available, study the animal's cycle of nutrient needs. Breeding females require more and more nutrients through a pregnancy. So, timing the gestation phase of lowest nutrition requirement to the season of the year with the lowest quality forage is a sound management practice.

Another factor is labor. Labor required is largely determined by resources. There are numerous opportunities for decreasing chores or routines; for example, an automatic watering system will reduce labor required to fill water sources on a daily basis. If you travel, or have an unpredictable schedule, select the livestock that best matches the time you have available.

Make some feeding plans. Smaller acres mean less opportunity for year-round grazing. Know the nutritional quality of your forage and its growing season. Make plans for providing nutrients for the entire time you'll have the livestock, even outside of the growing season. This may include bringing in preserved forage in the form of hay bales or stockpiling a part of the pasture during the growing season for later use. If you're going to bring in hay from another location, storage and how the hay will be delivered to the animal is a consideration.

Regardless of the financial goal of the new endeavor, a financial management plan is a great idea. Tracking expenses and opportunities is critical for realizing a profit or a loss. Even if building income isn't a main goal, knowledge of the profit margin could impact future efforts.

Financial tracking can show areas for increased efficiency. Additionally, this data will lead to more meaningful conversations with other small-scale producers and knowledge resources.

Knowledge is possibly the most important resource to have. This could be personal experience, a relationship with a successful producer, or working with industry professionals. I highly encourage all livestock owners to participate in learning opportunities. Seek reliable resources; veterinarians, nutritionists, extension professionals, or successful producers.

For more information, contact Wendie Powell, Livestock Production Agent, (620) 784-5337, wendiepowell@ksu.edu.

###

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of K-State Research and Extension, Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts.