

# AGRICULTURE

## Golden Plains Area Newsletter

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## December 2020

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**GOLDEN PLAINS AREA**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Kit Carson, Phillips,  
Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma Counties cooperating.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

# AG BUSINESS

## 2019 ARC-CO Payments R. Brent Young

Producers enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage – County (ARC-CO) program title 1 program of the 2018 Farm Bill should begin receiving their 2019 crop year payments in October. The 2019 payments will be subject to a sequestration reduction.

Payments are made under ARC-CO when **ARC-CO Actual Revenue** is less than the **ARC-CO Guarantee** for a covered commodity. **ARC-CO Actual Revenue** is determined by multiplying the county yield during the crop year by the national price for that crop year. The **ARC-CO Guarantee** is calculated by multiplying the county benchmark yield by the national benchmark price.

The national benchmark price is determined by a 5 year Olympic Average (drop the high and the low and average the remaining three) of the higher of the Marketing Year Average (MYA) or the reference price. The national benchmark price is likely to be a bigger driver in determining the **ARC-CO Guarantee** than the county benchmark yield, as yields tend to follow predictable trend lines and do not vary much over time (barring unforeseen weather events).

Payments made for the 2019 corn crop are as follows: Kit Carson, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Logan, irrigated \$66.75, non-irrigated \$0.00; Morgan, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$4.62; Phillips, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00;

Sedgwick, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Washington, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$23.80; Yuma irrigated \$53.37, non-irrigated \$0.00. Remember these per acre payments are made on 85% of the corn base acres.

Payments for the 2018 corn crop in counties served by the Northeast Regional Engagement Center were as follows: Kit Carson, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Logan, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Morgan, all \$58.46; Phillips, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Sedgwick, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Washington, irrigated \$70.67, non-irrigated \$24.05; Yuma all \$0.00.

Payments for the 2017 corn crop in counties served by the Northeast Regional Engagement Center are as follows: Kit Carson, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Logan, irrigated \$6.24, non-irrigated \$3.24; Morgan, all \$0.00; Phillips, irrigated \$0.00, non-irrigated \$0.00; Sedgwick, irrigated \$13.08, non-irrigated \$0.00; Washington, irrigated \$6.23, non-irrigated \$3.24; Yuma all \$0.00.

If you have questions about this topic or any other agricultural business management issue, please feel free to contact me at 970-522-7207 or by email at [brent.young@colostate.edu](mailto:brent.young@colostate.edu)

**The 3R's of Loan Renewal Webinar Series**  
**Be Ready! Be Real! Be Responsible!**  
**R. Brent Young**

Thanksgiving is just a few weeks away and the start of the 2020 Holiday season. Many agricultural producers are also planning for the loan renewal season. In an effort to help farmers and ranchers prepare and secure financing for the 2021 growing season, the CSU Extension Ag Business Management (ABM) Team is offering the 3R's of Loan Renewal webinar series.

The 3R's of Loan Renewal webinar series is meant to assist farmers and ranchers in the development of balance sheets, income statements, and statement of cash flows. Producers will also learn how lenders evaluate your financial statements and use them in the renewal process. Participants will be introduced to several decision aids developed by the ABM Team that will assist them in preparing the documents necessary for completing the loan renewal process.

This 4 part webinar series consists of 3 "Virtual Owners Manual Sessions" that cover income statements, balance sheets, and statement of cash flows. These sessions will be pre-recorded, 30 minutes in length, and available after November 20th for you to view at your convenience.

A final "Virtual Coffee Shop Session" will be offered live via Zoom on Tuesday, December 8th from 6:30 to 8:30pm. After completing the recorded sessions, we will meet live to answer questions, discuss options, and help develop a plan for loan renewal season.

One fee of \$35 covers all four sessions. To register online go to <https://3RS.eventbrite.com>. For more information contact Brent Young at 970-522-7207 or email at [brent.young@colostate.edu](mailto:brent.young@colostate.edu)

## LIVESTOCK

**Drought, Plan Your Response**  
**Travis Taylor**

With the national weather shifting from the El Nino to a La Nina pattern, over 80 percent of Colorado finds itself in some form of a drought situation. This triggered the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan phase two to be activated. This also activated the Agricultural Impact Task Force which will conduct an initial assessment on physical and economic impacts and recommend mitigation opportunities. Cow/calf producers should have a thought out and well developed plan to deal with drought. A plan that ties to the economics and grazing resources under the ranches control.

The cow herd can be thought of as the "Factory Unit," but without the forage input and land to put the factory on a producer has limited options for economic success. Drought plans should involve a series of trigger points to help the operation make strategic and thought out positions when dealing with drought. This allows producers to make calculated decisions that take into account forage and soil health, tax situation, cow herd genetics, long term recovery and ranch profitability. Emotions can drastically affect the decision making process during drought, by responding to preset

trigger points ranches can respond without having the desperate “all or nothing” decisions.

Measuring parameters need to be established to determine trigger points. The easiest measureable parameter for most operators is the amount of precipitation or rainfall through the winter and spring. Just as important is the timing of moisture. Moisture after the cool season grass species growing season does little to improve range stocking rates. It is certain that the amount and timing of rainfall immensely impacts the forage produced in a given year. With this in mind, trigger points need to be established accordingly. For example a ranch may normally receive 50 percent of its annual rainfall by July 1, but at that date this year rainfall is only thirty percent of normal. A significant decrease may trigger the ranch to early wean calves to decrease cow forage and nutritional demands.

Another example would occur if on October 1 the ranch has received only 50 percent of its expected rainfall. This could trigger one or more of the responses that no replacement heifer calves are kept, or all cows over nine years would be sold. Such moves should be seen as an opportunity to increase the productivity and efficiency of your cowherd. Other actions that could be associated with trigger points may be to cull cows below a body condition score of 4, or cull the cows that weaned calves weighing in the bottom 25 percent of the heard the past two years. Actions taken during drought plans should target efficiency such as reducing average cow age, shorting calving period, or removing cows with higher maintenance

requirements.

It is important to have a number of trigger points and reasonable responses. The longer a drought continues the more aggressive producers need to be to reduce grazing pressure on the ranch. Producers that sell prior to a necessary drought liquidation phase, and when indicators tell them to do so, usually receive higher prices for their cattle. This gives those same producers a better position financially to re-stock and land more time to recover. It is important to remember that feeding your way out of a drought is expensive. Seedstock producers may attempt to do this to preserve the valuable genetics that they have developed, but in a commercial situation it can be costly to maintain the core herd genetics during periods lasting over a year. During multi-year droughts it may become imperative to remove all grazing from the rangeland, and available hay and alternative forage most likely will be expensive in such a situation. Ranches that have a responsive drought plan, are proactive, and understand managing to stockpile standing forage during wet years are better able to react to a drought. It is economically important to have plans, record important information, and be responsive when facing drought to make sound decisions and decide on the spur of the moment. The Colorado State University Extension ABM team has created some decision tools to help producers that can be found at <http://www.wr.colostate.edu/ABM/decision.shtml> website. The “Buy Hay or Sell Cows” and the “Strategies for Cattle Herd During Drought” spreadsheet tools can assist producers with making the right financial decisions for their operations

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## **Corn Stalk Grazing**

**Travis Taylor**

Historically, the Golden Plains Area counties impact Colorado’s beef industry by providing corn stalk residue as a fall and winter feed source for dry pregnant cows. This opportunity has provided corn

growers a second source of income from their crop, while providing cow/calf producers a less expensive forage and the opportunity to rest native winter range. Despite improved harvesting technology and

equipment, grazing will reduce field volunteer corn stands that result as kernels pass through a combine, or ear lost to environmental weather conditions. With the opportunities that grazing corn residue brings, other key items should be considered before making any agreements.

Stocking fields correctly can have a dramatic economic effect for producers as leases are generally calculated on a per head basis. Research from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) has concluded that there will be about 16 pounds of leaf and husk per bushel of corn yield left as residue. Therefore, in a field that yields 160 bushels/acre there would be 2560 pounds of quality residue. In a “take half, leave half” grazing practice, this equates to 1280 pounds, or enough residue per acre to feed a 1200 pound dry pregnant cow 48 days. The UNL Beef Team developed a simple excel spreadsheet to help producers determine field grazing capacity based on corn yield. Called the “Corn Stalk Grazing Calculator”, it is available free online at <https://beef.unl.edu/learning/cornstalkgrazingcalc.shtml>. Still, unforeseen weather events such as wind, rain, and snow can have drastic effects on forage available. For example leaf material is light and can be moved around by winds, and husks are easily tromped into muddy fields. Cattle can graze though as much as 4 to 6 inches of snow, but should that snow melt and turn to ice, cattle will be unable to uncover residue. It is prudent to have an emergency plan or reserve feed supply in case severe weather shortens the grazing period.

A bred 1200 pound cow needs to be gaining one pound per day during her last trimester. She should consume two percent of her body weight in dry matter. Corn residue averages around 85 percent dry matter, so the example cow eats approximately 26.5 pounds of residue daily. This is enough feed to meet her energy requirement, as average corn stalk residue provides between 52 and 55 percent Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN). However, cattle selectively graze fields in an order searching out the excess grain, leaves, husks, cobs and finally stalks that make up corn residue. This means that although available energy starts as high as 70 percent TDN, it

will decrease to less than 45 percent as cows are reduced to eating cobs and stalks. This problem is compounded as cows graze later into the winter because as residue energy levels fall, the cow’s energy demands increase due to fetal development. During the same time as residue nutritional value drops and the cow needs increase, fetal growth is also compressing and limiting rumen space so cows consume less of a diminished quality forage. If possible, cross fencing fields or strip grazing may allow for the best utilization of forage and give managers the ability to provide more consistent energy levels, thus maintaining cow body condition score.

Protein supplementation is need for pregnant cows grazing corn residue, especially during their last trimester. Corn fields will not provide enough protein to meet their daily 1.75 pounds Crude Protein (CP) requirement. Average corn residue is only 5 to 5.5 percent CP, leaving cows 0.3 to 0.5 pounds short of their daily needs. This is even more crucial as the excess corn and leaf material are gleaned from the field. Secondly, as excess corn is removed, residue grazing will not meet the phosphorous requirements of a late gestation cow developing a fetus. While residue should meet calcium requirement, phosphorus availability is below required levels. Phosphorous supplementation should be at levels that provide the desired 2:1 calcium to phosphorus ratio needed for fetal development. Free choice salt should be provided and can be combined in loose form with sodium bicarbonate to help buffer rumen acid levels as cows “hunt out” grain during initial grazing. Before turning out cattle, it is wise to check fields for any “dumped” corn piles, as piles would be easy opportunities for cows to overload on grain.

Finally, ensuring cattle have access to adequate water may be the most important factor to grazing stock fields. As always, restricted water intake equals reduced feed intake and decreased nutrient absorption particularly with a dry forage like corn residue. Research from the National Research Council suggest that it takes 8 to 12 gallon per day for a 1200 pound dry cow during the winter. That

same cow may only intake 8 gallons on a 40 degree day, but may need 12 gallons if it is 70 degrees. It would be a safe assumption that water availability at one gallon per 100 pounds of body weight should be provided during winter grazing for dry cows. With this in mind, a 10 foot diameter 2 foot high standard round tank will hold approximately 1170 gallons and would water up to 100 head even on the hotter winter days in the Golden Plains Area.

Corn stalk residue grazing can be economically beneficial when it works into a producer's budget. Information on grazing lease rates, help with leases or other beef decision tools including determining your cow carrying costs can be found at the CSU Agriculture Business Management team website <http://www.wr.colostate.edu/ABM/resources.shtml>.

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## Nitrate Testing Only as Good as the Sample

Scott Stinnett

The dry conditions of summer 2020 has produced an abundance of high nitrate forages. These hays, crop residues (stover) and even weeds with high nitrates leave many producers utilizing Extension and other commercial vendors to help determine the toxicity of the forage.

Forage samples brought into the Extension offices will usually be given an initial diphenylamine test. A few drops of the diphenylamine solution are placed on the forage sample and observed for an intense dark blue or purple color change. This color change can indicate the presence of nitrate above a level of 5,000 part per million (ppm). If the results are positive (blue color), the forage should be then sent to a laboratory for quantitative analysis before feeding. Occasionally, false positive reactions occur with diphenylamine tests. However, any sample resulting in a positive reaction should be tested at a competent laboratory.

Understanding the results of a quantitative analysis completed by a competent laboratory is imperative. The results are based on the sample provided for testing. For the most accurate possible test results, samples should be taken from various parts of a field or from multiple bales of hay. The test will give a quantitatively averaged result from the sample provided. Producers should understand there

could still be outlier plants, parts of a field or bales that are higher in nitrate than the test results show.

Caution should always be used when making feeding and grazing decisions when test results show the presence of high nitrate levels. The total amount of nitrates of all feedstuffs consumed and even the nitrate level of water consumed should be considered in the decision process. A feed that does not test high using diphenylamine does not mean it is without nitrates. The feed may be used to help lower the overall nitrate level of the diet, but how much it lowers the nitrate level depends on its nitrate level. Knowing the nitrate level of all forage feedstuffs in the ration is the only way to accurately mix ration components to lower the total nitrate level of the ration.

There are three types of commercial laboratory tests for forage nitrates. The nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3$ ) test shows parts per million (ppm) of nitrate and is the easiest to interpret. The other two commercial tests provide some slightly different numbers. Nitrate-nitrogen ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ) and potassium nitrate ( $\text{KNO}_3$ ) tests gives different result numbers but can be converted to equate to the nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3$ ). Colorado State University Range Extension has a calculator that can be used to make the conversions. It can be found at:

[www.range.colostate.edu/nitratecalc.shtml](http://www.range.colostate.edu/nitratecalc.shtml).  
Colorado State University Extension has the

following recommendations based on the results of  
a nitrate (NO<sub>3</sub>) test:

<b>Nitrate Level (Maximum)</b>	<b>Recommendations Based on the Maximum Nitrate Level</b>
0-4400 ppm	Considered safe to feed under all conditions
4,500 ppm	Generally safe for non-pregnant animals under all conditions. Limit pregnant animals to 50% of the total dry matter in the ration.
6,700 ppm	Do not feed without rationing. Limit to 50% of the total dry matter in the ration.
8,900 ppm	Do not feed without rationing. Limit to 35-40% of the total dry matter in the ration.
15,000 ppm	Do not feed to pregnant animals. Do not feed without rationing. Limit to 25% of the total dry matter in the ration.
17,700 ppm +	Do not feed. Even with rationing, this feed is toxic. Feeds over 1.76% nitrate are toxic.

For more information on nitrate testing of forage and nitrate poisoning of livestock visit CSU Fact Sheet No. 1.610 – Nitrate Poisoning at

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/agriculture/nitrate-poisoning-1-610/>

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**Utilizing High-Nitrate Forages**  
Travis Taylor

Extreme dry weather has left livestock forage short in Colorado and increased the nitrate levels in hay and stubble fields stressed. As hay prices continue to rise and native range is depleted, producers need economical and safe ways to possibly utilize feeds that test higher for nitrates. Often high-nitrate feeds can be blended or fed to non-pregnant animals. If a producer is contemplating feeding a high-nitrate feed in such a manner, it is imperative to do quantitative nitrate analysis on all the forages they are using. For questions on taking samples or assistance with testing, contact your local Colorado State University Extension Office. The CSU Extension fact sheet found online at [https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-](https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/agriculture/nitrate-poisoning-1-610/)

[areas/agriculture/nitrate-poisoning-1-610/](https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/agriculture/nitrate-poisoning-1-610/) contains guidance for testing and information about what levels are safe for different classes of livestock.

The way to feed high-nitrate hay safely is to blend or dilute it with low-nitrate feeds or supplements. This will decrease the total diet nitrate level (including water levels) down to a safe and useable level. When mixing low and high-nitrate hay together, it is critical that animals consume both high and low-nitrate hays in the correct ratio. Most likely this will require grinding, mixing and delivering the hay in a total mixed ration. Increased energy in the diet has been shown to help speed up and convert nitrate to protein in the rumen, thus

adding grain or other high energy feeds in the ration may effectively help reduce nitrate levels.

Do not simultaneously feed free-choice one bale of low-nitrate hay and another bale of high-nitrate hay. Similarly, rolling out hay or using bale processors for separate low- and high-nitrate hays doesn't work. Certain animals may prefer consuming the high-nitrate hay. Due to "pecking order" only the timid cows may get the high-nitrate feed. If hays cannot be mixed properly, it is better to feed the low-nitrate hay first and immediately after cows clean it up then follow with the high-nitrate bale. Since rate of nitrate consumption is important, never feed high-nitrate hay to hungry cattle, or if animals have been restricted from feed such as being in dry lot over night or during and directly after a snowstorm. Moreover, avoid feeding high-nitrate feeds when it is damp, as they become more toxic most likely because the nitrates are already converting to the toxic nitrite from before being consumed. Standing forages such as failed sorghum or corn, as well as stubble fields will also contain various amounts of nitrates. It is important to sample test such fields prior to grazing, especially those with failed crops that may have been heavily fertilized. Most stressed plants store excess nitrates in the stalk of the plant, thus such fields may provide some grazing availability, so long as

livestock are allowed to consume the preferred grain, leaf and husk material and not forced to eat the plant stalk.

It is important to remember that feeding higher levels of nitrates has everything to do with bacteria population in the rumen. Livestock are able to acclimate to higher levels over time as the rumen bacteria are able to change. This is accomplished by feeding smaller amount of higher nitrate hays more frequently, and not in a single daily feeding that floods the rumen with nitrates. If cattle are allowed to adjust slowly over a period of time to feeds that have potentially toxic levels of nitrates, they will develop a population of microbes in the rumen that convert nitrates to a non-toxic form. There are also direct-fed microbial products available that contains a specialized bacteria culture intended to develop a rumen population that produces enzymes to convert nitrates and nitrites that enter the rumen to a non-toxic form. If such a product is used, all animals must get the proper amount to establish the needed microbial population. Using feeds that contain high nitrate concentrations is not without risk, but feeds that contain nitrates can be fed successfully. Use the management practices mentioned above to reduce the chance of animal loss.

## HORTICULTURE

### Rock Spirea

By CSU Horticulture Agent, Linda Langelo

Did you know that there is a plant that does even better than lilacs in our drought and extreme weather? A native spirea called Cream bush Rock Spirea or Mountainspray grows in "our own backyard" and is so underused. Its Latin name is *Holodiscus dumosus*. It is one of two native species recognized by the USDA in North America. It

grows in Colorado, Arizona, Texas for some of the western states where it is naturally found.

It can take dry to moist soils. It blooms white flowers from June through July. The white blossoms are displayed as clusters at the end of beautiful arching habit. This is one of its best features. After the blossoms are fruits that ripen in

late summer. These fruits can persist through the winter and into the next season. The fruit is good for birds. This shrub is pollinated by insects.

It is good in an open, sunny woodland garden. Since it can grow to ten feet in height, this should be placed at the back of a perennial bed or nearby a building. Some sources even say Cream bush Rock Spirea can grow to 15 feet. In its native habitat it grows on coastal bluffs, open forest areas, disturbed areas, and roadsides. Anything that can grow along a roadside has to be a tough plant.

The Colorado Springs Utilities rates this plant well suited to dry areas in zone 4. The Colorado Springs Utilities has a Xeriscape Garden containing over 500 varieties of trees, shrubs, grasses, perennials, biennials, and annuals that grow well in their area. The USDA rates it being able to do well up to an altitude of 10,000 feet.

The Colorado Springs Utilities Xeriscape Garden observes the Cream bush Rock Spirea growing to

four to six feet tall and four to six feet wide. The also rate the plant's performance. The plants doing the best are growing in full sun. The plant has yet another added feature of exfoliating bark which adds interest in the winter.

I think this is a plant to trial in your garden. The only maintenance it needs is some light spring pruning. The Cream bush Rock Spirea is called "Ironwood" according to Northwest Native Plants Society because native people used it for tools and utensils. If you heat the wood over an open flame, and polish it with horsetail stems, it can be used as roasting tongs. In fact, the Northwest Native Plants Society documents this wood as being used for pegs when nails were not as available as they are today. Other uses for the wood were digging sticks, fishing hooks, needles, canoe paddles, bows, and spear, harpoon, and arrow shafts. A tough plant for more than just our environmental droughts.

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## SAVE THE DATE

### 33rd Annual High Plains No-Till Conference

Feb. 2-3, 2021  
Burlington Community Center  
340 S. 14th Street  
Burlington, CO 80807

Conference details can be found at <http://www.highplainsnotill.com/index.html>, click on the conference tab. More details will be available as the conference dates get closer.

## 2020 Golden Plains Area Agricultural Handbook Orders Being Taken Now

The 2020 edition of the Golden Plains Area Agricultural Handbook is currently in production and orders are being taken now for your copy. This publication is a permanent and often used item in many farm, ranch and agribusiness offices in Northeastern Colorado. This resource book contains the latest university research for high plains agriculture in Colorado. Most of the research results presented in the handbook are conducted on local farms and ranches in the area.

The handbook will be formatted in two parts this year. Part one will contain much of the crop

production, water management, crop pathology, insect control and weed management information. Part two will contain information on, livestock cost of production, and crop cost of production. In total subscribers will find approximately 150 pages of current research information required to make informed decisions for agricultural operations.

Pricing for the handbook will remain the same as previous years with tiered pricing for multiple subscriptions and the availability of a printed copy or CD version.

### CD Version

Copies	Before 1/10/2021	After 1/10/2021
1 to 4	\$8.00	\$11.00
5 to 9	\$7.00	\$10.00
10 or more	\$6.00	\$9.00

### Printed Version

Copies	Before 1/10/2021	After 1/10/2021
1 to 4	\$25.00	\$28.00
5 to 9	\$23.00	\$26.00
10 or more	\$21.00	\$24.00

The CD version has the added benefit of spreadsheet templates and other resources useful in the decision-making process. The deadline for receiving a break on your subscription price is January 30, 2021. Order forms are available at Golden Plains Area Extension offices or from the web site at [www.goldenplains.extension.colostate.edu/agricultural-handbook](http://www.goldenplains.extension.colostate.edu/agricultural-handbook). Purchase and payment can be made online or printed and sent to the Washington Count

Extension Office at 181 Birch, Akron, CO 80720. Don't miss out, hurry and get your order in today.

Another option to obtain your copy of the Agricultural Handbook is to download a printable version from the GPA web site at <http://goldenplains.extension.colostate.edu/agricultural-handbook>. You can download your copy or order a print or cd format.

# ORDER FORM

## 2020 Golden Plains Area Agricultural Handbook



GOLDEN PLAINS AREA  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

Please complete this order form and mail with a check for the appropriate amount to:

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181 Birch Avenue  
Akron, Colorado 80720

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10 or more	\$21.00/copy	\$24.00	
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Please make check payable to: *GPA Extension Fund* with mail in registrations  
**Online** ordering and payment is available at <http://goldenplains.extension.colostate.edu>  
 Cost includes postage and handling for Part 1 and Part 2.