

# RUSSELL COUNTY AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

## Timely Tips

**Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Professor, University of Kentucky**

### Fall-Calving Herd

Contact your veterinarian and pregnancy diagnose the cow herd. If a large animal veterinarian is not available in your area, consider taking blood samples for pregnancy diagnosis. Remove open cows at weaning time. Plan marketing program for calves. Consider various options, such as maintaining ownership and backgrounding in a grazing program, or precondition and sell in a CPH-45 feeder calf sale. Initiate fly control for the cows when fly population builds up. Calves may be weaned anytime now but you can take advantage of the spring grass by leaving them on the cow a while or weaning and grazing.

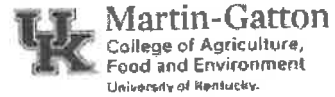
### Stockers

Keep calves on good pasture and rotate pastures rapidly during periods of lush growth. Manage to keep pastures vegetative for best performance. Provide mineral mix with an ionophore. Implant as needed. Control internal and external parasites.

### General

Harvest hay. Work around the weather and cut early before plants become too mature. Harvesting forage early is the key to nutritional quality. Replenish your hay supply! Rotate pastures as needed to keep them vegetative. Clip pastures to prevent seedhead formation on fescue and to control weeds. Seed warm season grasses this month.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### Beekeeper's Meeting

**June 5th: 6:00 PM CST**

Russell County Extension Office

### Russell County Farmer's Market

#### Grand Opening

**June 27th**

Russell County Extension Office

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Oakes'.

Jonathan Oakes  
CEA for Agriculture and Natural  
Resources

### Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources  
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University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, UK Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Cooperative Extension  
Lexington, KY 40506



# Economic & Policy Update

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Editors: Will Snell & Nicole Atherton



Department of Agricultural Economics  
University of Kentucky

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## KFBM Spring 2025 Observations

*Author(s): Kentucky Farm Business Management (KFBM) program*

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The Kentucky Farm Business Management Program is a program of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Kentucky. Extension Specialists serve four Farm Analysis Associations working with cooperating members to improve farm management techniques and decisions through recordkeeping and analysis. Currently, KFBM serves 355 farms that are representative of 49 counties. KFBM specialists work closely with diverse farm cooperators, and this article will share some of the real-time observations that they have seen this spring.



### Weather and Production Report

All KFBM regions throughout the state experienced significant flooding in early April due to historical rainfall of 10 to 15 inches. Ohio Valley producers endured multiple wind events, an ice storm, and a particularly destructive hailstorm. Farmers have been grading ditches, clearing debris, repairing buildings, equipment, and vehicles, and are still assessing damage from the most recent early April

floods. River levels are high for both the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers but are expected to drop rapidly in late April.

**All regions** reported a delay in field work, especially planting, due to the cool, wet spring. Many crops that were planted at the first of the season in the **Pennyroyal** region will likely need to be replanted. As fields dry out, farmers are getting into planting and finishing tillage work. Specialists in **all KFBM regions** mentioned river bottom ground as a particular concern as water continues to stand in many places. The probability of these areas being planted late, or not at all, is high. **Lincoln Trail** and **Pennyroyal** reported hay and pasture ground is rebounding from the heavy rains and greening up nicely, stoking optimism for cattle farmers. There are lingering concerns about hay yields due to ground underwater.

Many **Purchase** area crop acres have shifted from wheat to canola or rapeseed, which are currently in a bright yellow bloom across the region. The growing canola and rapeseed are primarily being grown with a contract for future use. A strong yield for these crops, coupled with a contracted price, would be a needed boost in cash flow. In the **Pennyroyal** area, wheat is growing fast after a brief slowdown due to cool temperatures. However, some areas in **Pennyroyal** experienced significant crop loss due to the flooding. Profitability for wheat, even those with strong yields, is a huge concern.

### Financial News

Beginning with positive news, **Lincoln Trail** and **Pennyroyal** specialists noted good financial positions for cattle farmers and dairies due to steady, strong market conditions. Livestock producers in these areas expect the cattle market to stay firm for 2025, which is a needed reprieve after several years of poor profitability. It's not all good news on the cattle front. Pockets of **Pennyroyal** producers were faced with large death loss in January and February, which will negatively impact net farm incomes for 2025, especially on those that prematurely lost livestock purchased at higher prices.

**All KFBM regions** reported steep declines in returns, often negative, for grain farmers. Many farmers in the **Purchase** area have had to refinance debts and stretch out loans to make up insufficient cash flows. Higher interest rates have made the debt service on these refinances more difficult for cash flow. Farms continue to see an impact on profitability due to interest rates in the 7-9% range.

Negative returns were slightly abated by the receipt of economic assistance payments issued by the USDA through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP). These payments were issued on a per acre basis, \$42.91 for corn, \$29.76 for soybeans, \$31.83 for canola, \$23.63 for rapeseed, and \$30.69 for wheat. To date, eligible **KFBM** producers have received 85% of the initial ECAP calculated payment, with the remaining 15% to be received in August if funds remain. Payments were a needed cash flow relief that helped producers mitigate increased input costs and depressed commodity prices. However, many **KFBM** producers reported negative returns, even with ECAP payments factored in.

Despite reduced farm profits, several winter auctions in the **Purchase** area for farmland brought top dollar. The trend of non-farm investors using money from outside ventures to procure farmland continues to tick upward. Equipment purchases in **Ohio Valley** have slowed, although items that are purchased are priced high. Working capital for most **KFBM** farms dropped significantly, some seeing a 6-7 figure drop year over year. **Management Adjustments** Many **KFBM** farms worked with their

specialists in the fall and winter to develop cash flow projections and crop plans to ensure a profit for

2025. Those projections are incredibly tight.

Commodity prices are not at a level to cover costs. To adapt, farms are making a variety of adjustments to their operations.

Some farmers in the **Purchase** and **Pennyroyal** have opted to reduce expenses by planting only soybeans and drawing on residual fertilizer in the soil. In addition, a handful of farmers are anticipating a last-minute switch to soybean acres due to flooding and timing concerns. Access to credit and higher interest has influenced the corn/bean decision. Declining cash reserves, and tighter lending measures have left some farms without “room” on their operating line to support the heavier cost of raising a corn crop, despite a slightly better profit outlook. Other farms in the **Pennyroyal** and **Ohio Valley** areas, especially those on a corn/double crop rotation, have no intention of changing existing crop rotation plans, even with the weather concerns.

The decline in profitability is leaving no margin for error. Farmers in **Lincoln Trail**, **Ohio Valley**, and **Pennyroyal** are struggling with the added expense of flood mitigation efforts and are exploring government assistance to offset these costs. **KFBM** producers are reducing their equipment expenses by downsizing, refinancing, leasing, and revamping replacement plans. Farmers are more diligent about monitoring fertilizer and chemical applications, as well as invoices, because they cannot afford mistakes that could cause yield reductions or repeated field tasks.

### **Producer Sentiment and Outlook**

It's impossible to assess with certainty the sentiment of a large group of producers with broad geographic, financial, political, personal, and familial differences. However, KFBM specialists have unique experiences of meeting with producers throughout the year and have reported sentiments expressed by farmers.

While a handful of **Pennyroyal** grain producers report cautious optimism for 2025, most grain producers across **KFBM** share an increasingly pessimistic outlook. Beef and dairy producers are expecting 2025 to be a positive year – grain farmers are *hoping* it will be better than 2024.

Stress levels are high. One farmer commented, “It won’t be the long hours or the physical work that kills me, it’ll be the stress.” Historic weather events, depressed commodity prices, and volatile changes surrounding tariff wars have contributed to growing stress levels and pessimism. Producers report great uncertainty for the future as their financial positions decline and neighbors are pushed out of the industry. They remember losing money in 2018 after retaliatory soybean tariffs by China, despite increased government payments. They drained their cash reserves in 2023 and 2024 and are trying to navigate negative working capital.

More positive producers cite the cyclical nature of agriculture and a healthy equity position for adopting a pragmatic view of 2025. They view the recent flooding as an opportunity to address land improvements they've been putting off. These producers may try to be proactive by critically evaluating their operation. They have short-term concerns about tariffs but draw on a belief that long-term benefits should be realized. These producers look back at other bad years and remind themselves they made it through.

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### **Author(s) Contact Information:**

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# Kentucky Pest News: Fire Blight Symptoms Now Visible on Fruit Crops

Fire blight is the most important disease of apple and pear in Kentucky. Symptoms may now be visible; however, initial infections occurred at bloom. The pathogen survives winter in dead, dying, and diseased wood and in cankers. Removal of these pathogen sources can reduce spread of fire blight and should be completed in late winter while the pathogen is dormant.

## Fire Blight Facts



Figure 1: Apple flower clusters infected with fire blight. (Photo: Nicole Gauthier, UK)

- Early symptoms include wilt of flower cluster and blossom death (Figure 1). Disease spreads to shoots or branches where tips wilt and rapidly die (blight) to form a characteristic 'shepherd's crook' (Figure 2). Dark brown, sunken cankers (stem lesions) develop and expand to girdle branches, resulting in branch death (Figure 3).
- Potential hosts include apples, pears, and several landscape woody ornamentals in the rose family.
- Primary infection occurs at bloom and may continue through petal fall or until shoot elongation ends.
- Rainy conditions, periods of high humidity, and temperatures between 65-70°F favor disease development.
- Caused by the bacteria *Erwinia amylovora*.
- Bacterial cells overwinter in dead, dying, and diseased wood.



Figure 2: Rapid shoot death from fire blight may result in a 'shepherd's crook' appearance. (Photo: Nicole Gauthier, UK)

Figure 3: Dark brown, shrunk cankers develop and expand to girdle branches. (Photo: Nicole Gauthier, UK)

### **Management Options**

- Select varieties that are tolerant or resistant to fire blight.
- Maintain plant health with proper nutrition and irrigation practices.
- Prune to increase air flow through the plant canopy.
- Remove infected plant tissues during winter when plants and pathogens are dormant. Do not prune when trees are wet. Burn, bury, or otherwise dispose of diseased material.
- Bactericides should be applied preventatively. Once infection occurs, sprays are not effective. Homeowners can apply copper during dormancy to reduce overwintering inoculum. Additional bactericides available for commercial growers are presented in the Commercial Fruit Pest Management Guide (ID-232). Always follow label directions when utilizing bactericides.
- Fire blight risk throughout the season can be determined by the disease development models available through the UK Ag Weather Center website.

**By Kim Leonberger, Plant Pathology Extension Associate and Nicole Gauthier, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist**



## Recipe

# ASPARAGUS TOMATO STIR-FRY

- **¾ pound** fresh asparagus
- **¼ cup** chicken or vegetable broth
- **1 tablespoon** lite soy sauce
- **½ teaspoon** ground ginger
- **1** clove garlic, minced
- **¼ teaspoon** black pepper
- **1 teaspoon** cornstarch
- **4** green onions
- **2** Roma tomatoes
- **1½ cups** fresh mushrooms
- **1 tablespoon** olive oil

- 1. Trim** asparagus and cut into 1 inch pieces.
- 2. Combine** broth, soy sauce, ginger, garlic, pepper and cornstarch in a small bowl to make sauce.
- 3. Chop** green onions and tomatoes into ½ inch pieces. **Slice** mushrooms.

- 4. Pour** oil into a wok or large skillet and **preheat** over medium-high heat.
- 5. Add** asparagus and green onions; **stir-fry** 4 minutes.
- 6. Add** mushrooms; **stir-fry** 1 additional minute or until asparagus is tender-crisp.
- 7. Push** vegetables to the outer sides of the wok. **Add** sauce in center, **cook** until thick and bubbly. **Add** tomatoes.
- 8. Stir** well and **heat** through.

**Yield:** 4, ¾ cup servings.

**Nutritional Analysis:** 70 calories, 4 g fat, 0.5 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 210 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 3 g sugars, 3 g protein.

<http://plateitup.ca.uky.edu>

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# Planning on Canning?

**UK** Martin-Gatton  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
University of Kentucky



**It's never a good idea to purchase a pressure canner at a yard sale or flea market as replacement parts and manufacturer's instructions may not be available.**

**Pressure canners made after 1997 are designed with more safety features and weigh much less than older canners.**

**You should test the gauge on dial-gauge pressure canners each year. Your local extension office can do this for you!**

Always use research-based recipes to preserve foods. These recipes are available in UK Cooperative Extension Service home canning publications, the Ball Blue Book Guide to Preserving, or the National Center for Home Food Preservation's website <https://nchfp.uga.edu/>. Follow each recipe exactly as written. Do not make additions or changes unless options are provided in the recipe. Not following the recipe precisely or using a recipe that is not research-based, may result in sickness.

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