Christian County Soil and Water Conservation

SOIL AND WATER NEWS

CHRISTIAN COUNTY
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Oct-Dec 2016

Special Points of Interest

- Forage Management Guide for October—December
- What can your Soil and Water District do for you
- Fall Web Worms
- The Parks and Water Sales Tax
- Calendar of Events
- Christian County Rented and Loaned Equipment

Forage Management Guide

October:

- Evaluate the thistle situation and apply needed herbicide to fields with severe infestation. This needs to be done while the plants are actively growing.
- Continue to allow fescue to stockpile. The longer the delay in using the fescue, the more hay-on-the-stump will accumulate.

November:

- Start planning ahead for next year. Identify weak links in the system. What can be done to grow better forage longer? What will make the system easier to manage?
- Start using stockpiled fescue. Allow livestock access to one to three days of forage at a time.
- To improve winter feeding efficiency, test forages before feeding begins.
- At the start of winter feeding, separate the herd into lactating and dry cows and give the best quality pastures to the cows with calves.
- Prepare water systems for the freezing weather.
- Check with the Farm Service Agency and the Soil and Water Conservation District for available cost-share assistance in forage program improvements.

December:

- Continue to use stockpiled forage. Use fescue wisely and it should be adequate for beef cows until late February or early March.
- Take soil tests and start planning for next year's growing season. Remember: grass is the primary crop and what is done this year will have an impact on next year's production.
- Feed hay stored outside first before the quality starts to decline.

What can your Soil and Water Conservation District do for you?

The Christian County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and partners have the ability to help you make your farm as productive and efficient as you want it to be. Through our various cost-share programs, rental equipment and **free** technical assistance we are here to help you. SWCD's are funded by a one-tenth-of-one percent parks, soils, and water sales tax which is shared by the Department of Natural Resources, Soil and Water Conservation Program and the Division of State Parks. Cost share practices include Permanent Vegetative Cover Establishment or improvement, Planned Grazing Systems, Nutrient and Pest Management, and Water Quality programs. Most state program pay up to 75% of the state average cost or a per acre incentive.

Contact our office at 581-2719 or www.swcd.mo.gov/christian to see how **we can help you.**

Fall Webworms

By Francis Skalicky, Missouri Department of Conservation

Once again, trees across the Ozarks are showing that the calendar doesn't have to say "fall" in order for fall webworms to appear.

Look across a southwest Missouri landscape that features trees and you may see splotches of web-enclosed clusters of caterpillars dotting the forest canopy. Many people remember these leaf-munching fall webworms from last year, when it seemed like they were everywhere in southwest Missouri that had trees. They may not be as prevalent this year as they were last summer, but they're still a common sight. As bad as the leaf damage may appear, these caterpillars are actually doing little harm to the overall health of the trees they're feeding on. Before discussing that, here's information about the caterpillars.

Though some people may call them bagworms or tent caterpillars, what's being seen now in tree canopies across southern Missouri are fall webworms. The caterpillars, which are bristled with tufts of long, light-colored hairs, are the larval stage of Hyphantria cunea, a moth that's found across much of the central and eastern U.S. Though fall webworm caterpillars are commonly seen on Walnut, Hickory and Persimmon trees in southwest Missouri, they actually feed on up to 90 species of deciduous trees in Missouri and other parts of their range.

The moths lay eggs on the leaves of trees in late spring or early summer. Larvae emerge, and the leaf-eating begins. Once feeding starts, the larvae congregate in masses and produce the silky web that surrounds and protects the entire colony. Several molts occur inside the web as feeding continues. The larvae then crawl to a protected place to spin a cocoon.

There, they transform into the pupa stage and eventually emerge in the final stage of their lives, a white moth with brown spots (or entirely white in the northern parts of its range). Fall webworm caterpillars are present in Missouri from spring to fall and produce two to three generations per year.

When you look at these large webs full of caterpillars and examine the bare limbs and skeletonized leaves left behind, it's hard to believe the trees aren't being damaged. However, in most cases, particularly those involving mature trees, little harm is being done to the tree's health. That's because, at this time of year, trees are in the final phase of their annual growth period.

It's true that any amount of defoliation is never ideal for a tree that still has leaves that are green, but it's equally true that the majority of trees at this stage in their annual life cycle can tolerate the caterpillars' leaf-eating activities. Thus, the damage to the tree's overall health, in most cases, is minimal. It should also be noted that, in the case of walnut or hickory trees, the leaf damage people are seeing now will have little effect on the nuts the trees will produce this fall. The main impact will be on fall color. Trees that have leaf damage will obviously not have as many showy leaves in autumn.

If you want to try to control the pests, the best method is a simple one — take a stick or a long-handled tool and break up the webs. Local birds feeding on the caterpillars will take it from there. You also put a nail on the end of a pole, twist it around the webbing and pull much of the webbing and caterpillars down from the trees.

Fall Webworms Continued

Don't worry about the web clusters you can't reach. Chemical use is discouraged because beneficial insects will likely be killed in the process. Plus, unless you can break up the web, the chemicals won't be able to reach the caterpillars. Some people try to burn the webs out of the tree, but this is also a bad idea because the fire does more damage to the tree than the caterpillars are doing. More information about fall webworms and other tree pests can be found at your nearest Missouri Department of Conservation office or at mdc.mo.gov.

Francis Skalicky is the media specialist for the Missouri Department of Conservation's Southwest Region. For more information about conservation issues, call (417) 895-6880.

The Parks, Soils, and Water Sales Tax

In November, Missouri voters will be asked to vote on The Parks, Soils, and Water Sales Tax. The Parks, Soils, and Water Sales Tax is a statewide one-tenth-of-one percent sales tax that provides funding for Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites and Soil and Water Conservation efforts. The tax is divided equally between the two efforts.

This is NOT a tax increase, it is just the approval to continue the tax that has been in effect since 1984.

Calendar of Events

EQIP Signup Deadline
November 18, 2016

SWCD Board of Commissioners

Sam Schaumann — Chairman
Joe Rozell — Treasurer
Tim Maples — Vice Chairman
Jim Spencer — Secretary
Tom Humble — Board Member

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Christian County Equipment Rental

- **No-Till Drill:** 3-10 ft. Haybuster, No-Till Drills; $10.00 per acre with a 10 acre minimum charge and a $20 delivery fee. *All equipment listed above is delivered and picked up.*
- **Spinning Jenny:** $75 refundable deposit
- **Ground Rod Driver:** $100 refundable deposit
- **Broadcast Seeder for ATV:** Electric motor; $100 refundable deposit
- **Soil Auger:** $70 refundable deposit
- **Burn Equipment:** $70 refundable deposit, requires an approved burn plan
- **Gasoline Powered "T" Post Driver:** Rent at a rate of $50 per weekday, $100 per weekend or $175 for five consecutive weekdays.

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