

Winter 2025

Agriculture Newsletter



215 Treuhaft Blvd., Suite # 7

Barbourville, KY 40906

(606) 546-3447

Fax: (606) 546-3110

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Autumn Winds

Christine Aiena- National Weather Service, Wilmington, Ohio



Autumn is widely recognized as the "season of change," as the environment undergoes visible transformations, including the alteration of leaf colors, the shortening and cooling of days, which in turn instigates shifts in animal migration patterns and concludes the growing season. Concurrently, the dog days of stagnant summer air are replaced by cool and breezy conditions. As we head into the autumn months, it's a good time to review wind and wind-related products the National Weather Service can issue.

Larger differences in air masses during autumn can lead to stronger frontal passages and storm systems; it's not uncommon for a strong low pressure system to move through with howling winds, only to depart leaving the trees bare of any color and leaves! These strong systems can cause structural damage and even injuries or, in rare circumstances, deaths. When wind speeds are sustained around 40 to 50 MPH, isolated wind damage is possible, like downed trees or branches, missing shingles or siding to homes, and downed power poles/lines. However, when higher wind speeds occur, even more significant damage is possible. A great example of this is when the remnants of Hurricane Helene moved through the Tennessee and Ohio Valleys last year. When a system like this moves through, the National Weather Service will issue Wind Advisories or High Wind Watches/Warnings. We'll break down the differences in the wind related products below:

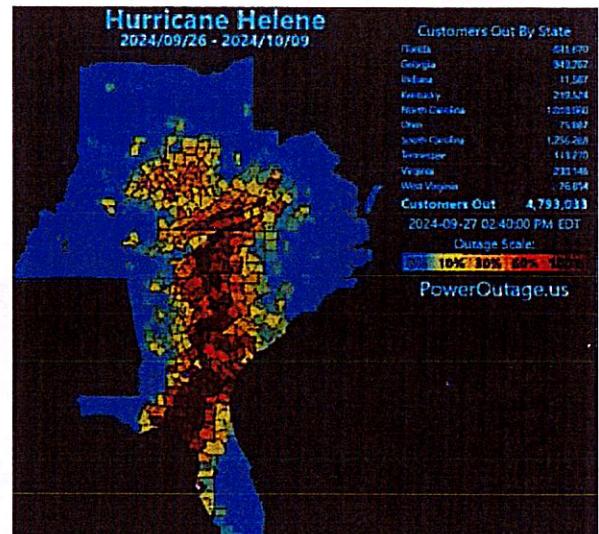
High Wind Watch: Be Prepared! Sustained, strong winds are possible. Secure loose outdoor items and adjust plans as necessary so you're not caught outside.

Wind Advisory: Take Action! Strong winds are occurring but are not so strong as to warrant a High Wind Warning. Objects that are outdoors should be secured and caution should be taken if driving.

High Wind Warning: Take Action! Sustained, strong winds with even stronger gusts are happening. Seek shelter. If you are driving, keep both hands on the wheels and slow down.

You can prepare for the strong winds ahead and hopefully prevent damage to your property, or worse, by taking the following steps:

- Trim tree branches away from your home and powerlines; secure loose gutters/shingles.
- Identify an interior room, such as a basement or interior bathroom, where you can take shelter during high wind events.
- Make a list of items outside of your home that you may need to bring inside or tie down so they don't blow away or fly through a window. Additionally, have a plan for your livestock and any outdoor pets for high wind events.
- Have an emergency kit ready! Include items such as spare food, water, and medication to last up to three days for each person in your home: remember, roads may be impassable due to debris making pharmacy or grocery trips difficult or impossible. Plan to have a light source in case power goes out, such as a flashlight or candles.



Power outages from Hurricane Helene. Courtesy of PowerOutage.us

How to keep your livestock and fields safer from mud

Source: Steve Higgins, assistant adjunct professor, Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering

As every livestock owner knows, mud is more than a nuisance. It robs animals of energy, wastes feed and tears up pasture. The good news is that a few wise choices about location and surface design can turn the worst trouble spots into firm, drainable ground that holds up month after month.

Start with placement

Heavy-use areas — feeders, gates, mineral sites and waterers — are best when set on a slight rise, not in a “bottom” or along a ditch. When you place these hubs on higher ground, you deal only with the rain that falls there, not with water flowing through from the rest of the field. That single decision cuts most of the mud before it is able to form.

Build a layered pad

Under any rock or gravel, separate soil from stone with felt-like, non-woven, geotextile fabric. Overlap seams by a foot or two, lay it flat, then cover with compacted dense-grade aggregate. Go easy with the first lift so you don’t tear the fabric, then make sure it is well compacted. This simple fabric-plus-rock system spreads the load from hooves and traffic, sheds water and resists rutting. When the surface loosens with use, add a thin layer of stone and compact again.

Choose the right surface for the spot

Concrete earns its keep around waterers, feed bunks and scraping lanes. Give it a rough finish — rougher than a sidewalk — to protect hips and joints. Where you want gravel but need more stability, plastic paver grids (think shallow egg cartons) lock rock in place and stop sloppy areas before they begin. Budget-friendly reinforcements, like filling old tires or cinder blocks with rock, can stiffen lanes and edges. Soil-cement can work for larger pads built in warm weather; use concrete where routine scraping is expected.

Daily habits that pay off

Keep hay off bare soil; once trampled into mud, it’s lost feed and a future weed patch. Scrape manure before it dissolves into sludge. Avoid driving heavy equipment across wet ground to reduce ruts that channel more water during the next rain. Give animals a firm path to and from water and feed so they don’t churn a single patch into soup. Where animals access a stream, build one armored entry or crossing rather than letting the whole bank break down.

Fixing cow paths

Grazing animals form contour trails (“cowtouring”) and single-file cow paths to save energy moving to water, feed and minerals. In wet weather, these routes can trough, erode, expose slick clay and become hard to traverse, especially on steeper slopes (cattle struggle above ~30%).

An all-weather path solves this by building a drainable base: excavate about eight inches, lay nonwoven geotextile, set recycled tire tread cylinders end-to-end in the trench and fill inside and around them with dense-grade aggregate. The tire tops finish at or just above grade. These paths provide firm footing year-round, cut energy costs for animals and protect fields from rutting and erosion.

Forest management plans: A roadmap to a healthier woodland

Source: Jacob Muller, assistant professor and extension forestry specialist

If you own woodland, you already know it's more than just trees — it's a living, breathing ecosystem full of potential. Whether your goals include timber production, wildlife habitat, recreation, or conservation, a

Forest Management Plan is your most effective tool for bringing your vision to life.

Think of a Forest Management Plan as a roadmap. It outlines your long-term goals for your land and lays out the steps to achieve them. It helps you understand what resources you have, what your land is capable of producing, and how to manage it sustainably. From hunting and hiking to timber harvesting and habitat restoration, your plan can be tailored to fit your unique objectives.

Creating a plan isn't a one-time event — it's a process.

Here are 10 key steps to developing and implementing a woodland management plan:

- 1. Identify goals and objectives.** What do you want from your woodland?
- 2. Conduct an inventory.** Assess tree species, soil, water, and forest health.
- 3. Revisit objectives.** Adjust based on what your land can realistically support.
- 4. Record area details.** Map and document conditions by stand.
- 5. Designate management areas.** Divide your land into zones based on use.
- 6. Select practices and schedule activities.** Choose actions like thinning or planting.
- 7. Implement practices.** Put your plan into action.
- 8. Keep records and evaluate.** Track progress and forest response.
- 9. Refine as needed.** Update your plan based on results and changing goals.
- 10. Enjoy Your Woodland!** Spend time in it to better understand how it responds.

If developing a plan seems daunting, the good news is that you don't have to do it alone. In fact, a professional forester or natural resource manager is the best resource available to you to help you articulate your goals, assess your land's potential, and design a realistic, achievable plan. They'll also help you navigate challenges like invasive species, disease and access issues.

Costs may vary significantly depending on the size of your woodland and the complexity of your goals.

Hiring a consulting forester to develop a plan may be beneficial, as it affords you, the landowner, some flexibility and ensures that someone visits your property in a timely manner. However, many state agencies, such as the Kentucky Division of Forestry, offer this service to landowners at no cost to them. One potential downside is that you may have to wait for a forester to become available to assist you in managing your woodlands.

Regardless of whom you work with, when it comes to implementing your plan, many state and federal programs offer financial assistance — and some even require a written plan to qualify. In Kentucky, for example, the Forest Stewardship Program offers technical and financial support to landowners who commit to sustainable management.

A Forest Management Plan isn't just a document — it's a commitment to your land's future. Whether you're managing 10 acres or 1,000, taking the time to plan today will pay off for decades to come.

OFF THE HOOF

Kentucky Beef Cattle Newsletter November 2025 Beef IRM Team

Timely Tips: Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Professor, University of Kentucky

Spring-calving cow herd

If you need to replace cows, consider buying bred heifers in some of the Kentucky Certified Replacement Heifer sales that are being held across the state this month.

Extend grazing for as long as possible to decrease the amount of stored feed needed. The drought is making this difficult for most of the state in 2025.

Evaluate body condition of cows. Sort thin (less than body condition score 5) cows away from the cow herd and feed to improve their condition. Two and three-year olds may need extra attention now.

These cattle can use the extra feed/nutrients.

Dry cows in good condition can utilize crop residues and lower quality hay now (but don't let them lose any more body condition). Save higher quality feed until calving time. Keep a good mineral supplement with vitamin A available.

It is imperative that producers contact their herd veterinarian to determine pregnancy in your cows if you have not already done so. The extreme heat and drought has resulted in thin, stressed cows during the breeding season and pregnancy rates may be significantly compromised. Pregnancy can also be determined using blood sampling. Several diagnostic labs will analyze blood samples for pregnancy and a chute-side test is on the market. Culling decisions should be made prior to winter feeding for best use of feed resources. Consider open, poor-producing, and aged cows as candidates for culling.

A postweaning feeding period will allow you to put rapid, economical gains on weaned calves, keep them through the fall "runs" and allow you to participate in Kentucky CPH-45 sales. Consider this health and marketing program which is designed for producers which are doing a good job of producing high quality feeder calves.

Replacement heifers require attention during the winter, too. Weaned heifer calves should gain at an adequate rate to attain their "target" breeding weight (2/3 of their mature weight) by May 1.

Fall-calving herd

Continue to watch fall-calving cows. Catch up on processing of calves including identification, castration, and vaccinations.

Cows that have calved need to go to the best pastures now! If your pastures are dried up, feed the good quality hay with an appropriate supplement to meet their daily nutrient requirements to help them maintain body condition prior to breeding in December.

If at all possible, try to get animals vaccinated 60 days or longer before the breeding season. Start the breeding season in late November or early December for calving to begin in September. If you are using AI and/or estrus synchronization, get your supplies together now and schedule your technician.

Make final selection of replacement heifers now.

Don't forget to contact your herd veterinarian to schedule a breeding soundness exam (BSE) for your bulls. All herd sires need a BSE at least 30 days before the onset of the breeding season. A BSE can be useful insurance that your bull has the physical ability to breed cows. Even though BSE's aren't perfect, they are the best tool we have to identify infertile bulls.

General

Have your hay supply analyzed for nutritive quality and estimate the amount of supplementation needed. Consider purchasing feed now.

Take soil tests and make fertility adjustments (phosphate, potash, and lime) to your pastures.

This is a good time to freeze-brand bred yearling heifers and additions to the breeding herd.

Graze alfalfa this month after a "freeze-down" (24 degrees for a few hours).

Don't waste your feed resources. Avoid excessive mud in the feeding area. Hay feeding areas can be constructed by putting rock on geotextile fabric. Feed those large round bales in hay "rings" to avoid waste. Concrete feeding pads could be in your long-range plans.

Consider bale grazing to decrease damage to your pastures and to more evenly distribute nutrients across your pastures.



UK Beef Management Webinar Series

Registration is necessary, however, if you received this email directly from Darrh Bullock then you are already registered. If you received this from another source, or have not registered previously, then please send an email to dbullock@uky.edu with Beef Webinar in the subject line and your name and county in the message. You will receive the direct link with a password the morning of each meeting. This invitation will directly link you to the site and you will be asked for the password which can be found just below the link. Each session will be recorded and posted for later viewing. **All meeting times are 8:00pm ET/7:00pm CT. Note: Meeting days have changed to the second THURSDAY of each month!!!**

November 13, 2025

Winter Feeding Approaches: Matching Strategy to Your Herd and Resources – Katie VanValin, Assistant Extension Professor, University of Kentucky

December 11, 2025

Shooting the Bull: Answering all your Beef Related Questions! – Updates and Roundtable discussion with UK Specialists

January 8, 2026

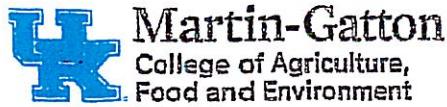
Making the Most of the Good Years: Profits, Reinvestment, and Tax Management in Beef Cattle Operations – Jonathan Shepherd, Agricultural Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

February 12, 2026

Impact of Bull Nutrition During Development on Semen Quality – Pedro Fontes, Associate Professor, University of Georgia

March 12, 2026

Bull Selection Practices in Kentucky: What are we Doing Right and What Could we Improve! – Darrh Bullock, Extension Professor, University of Kentucky



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