

Conservation Conversation



Bankers Conservation Award Nominations

Each year since 1950 the Barber County Bankers Association has recognized a producer who has shown outstanding conservation efforts with the Bankers Conservation Awards. The purpose of the program is to stimulate a greater interest in the conservation of Kansas agricultural resources by giving recognition to those farmers and landowners who have made outstanding progress in soil and water conservation on their farms.

Points to be considered in selecting soil conservation award winners include: (1) use of land according to its capabilities; (2) completeness of an applied farm plan; (3) balance of farm enterprise; (4) quality of conservation work and maintenance of practices; and (5) special practices unique to the farming operation.

The windbreak award considers windbreaks which provide protection from damaging winds for residential areas (or other structures), livestock or fields. Windbreaks need to be at least three years old. Points to be considered in selecting award winners include windbreak design, management, location, density and length.

Last year (2017) 185 Kansas producers and landowners were recognized through this program. Anyone owning or operating land in Barber County is eligible for these awards. If you know of someone you feel has done an outstanding job in the area of conservation, you can nominate that person by filling in the nomination blank, or by contacting Justin Goodno at the Barber County Extension office.

Please detach and return to
Barber County Conservation District
800 W 3rd Ave
Medicine Lodge, KS 67104

Nominee _____

Soil Conservation Award

Windbreak Award

Grassland Award

Water Conservation Award

Energy Conservation Award

Board of Supervisors

Calvin Boyd.....Chairman
Matt Cantrell.....Vice-Chairman
John Cook.....Treasurer
Ted Alexander.....Member
Ann Cargill.....Member

The Barber County Conservation District regular board meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month.

Office Closings:

October 8: Columbus Day
November 12: Veteran's Day
November 22: Thanksgiving Day
December 25: Christmas Day
January 1: New Year's Day

Livestock Watering Facilities—Planning and Maintenance

By Carl Jarboe, NRCS Soil Technician

See anything wrong with this picture?

I see several things I think need changed. Can calves drink from this tank? Maybe, but they better be long legged critters. It looks to me like the tanks have overflowed or just hoof action has moved the soil away from the tanks; no apron to help stabilize the soil around the tank.

How much water space is lost due to the cattails? I'm guessing better than 50% of the tank capacity is lost due to the foreign matter in the tank. Is that important?

The cattle panel in the tank is the only part of this picture I think makes good sense. Often a panel such as the one in the picture will keep cattle out of the tank—that's a good thing.



This picture tells a story about the water in the pasture. First, they must have more cattle drinking than one tank can supply because we see two tanks hooked together in tandem. This can work, however you lose tank drinking space with this type of installation.

A 12 foot round tank has a circumference of 37ft more or less. We allow for 1 foot of tank space per animal. This means 37 animals could drink at one time. In the setup we see in the picture we lose several feet of drinking space due to the close proximity of the second tank.

A 12 foot tank holds 1480 gallons of water. If we lose ½ due to the tank being full of plants and debris we are down to 740 gallons. If each cow drinks 6 gallons per drink we then have only enough water for 123 head if they drink it to the bottom of the tank. Half a tank full would water 62 head. Any more than that and the cattle are standing around, waiting for the tank to refill. 62 head would drink 31 gallons a minute. Does your well pump that much water? Most do not so you can see it's easy to get ahead of the delivery system.

Tanks should provide enough drinking space to allow for 10 to 20% of your herd to drink at one time. The recharge needs to keep up with the re-fill time or there has to be enough storage in the top half of that tank to water the entire herd. You will also need enough time to re-fill the tank before the herd hits the tank again. Some planning goes into tank size; give us a call, we'll be glad to assist you in figuring the right tank size for your water availability and herd size.

Maintenance is also huge. Just cleaning the tank yearly will make a big difference. We require drains on our cost share tanks for this very reason. Clean fresh water is what you like to drink—your cow herd will do better on good clean water too.

Check your floats and overflows on an annual basis, weekly or more often while the herd is in the pasture. Losing water because your float is stuck costs you money as well as the water. The overflowing tank can cause a mud hole which ends up making the tank a higher reach for smaller animals. Keeping a 4 to 5 foot rock apron around your tank will help stop those mud holes. Having an overflow pipe as well as a float is another way to prevent overflowing tanks.

Keep you solar panels clean. Dirty panels may cost you on a hot day. If you reduce production by 25% you may get behind your planned water delivery rate. That equals cattle waiting on a drink and not grazing.

How do your tanks look? Are they full of moss or even cattails? Maybe as you move your herd out of the summer pasture you should take a look and plan for a little tank cleaning this winter so you are ready for next year's grazing season.

Practice Maintenance Martin Gugelman, Civil Engineer Technician, Scott City, KS

Fall is that time of year when the fruits of the summer's labor will be harvested. When we are lucky enough to receive timely rains, those fruits can be somewhat larger than usual. Along with the rains that bring a larger harvest comes more maintenance for the harvest equipment due to the increased volume running through them. Your conservation practices are no different, they will need more maintenance as rainfall amounts increase, especially when large events happen.

When it comes to terraces and diversions, you will want to check for any overtopped or damaged areas and repair as needed. The constructed ridge height and block heights should be maintained. Any silt accumulations in the channel should be removed to maintain capacity and allow graded systems to drain as designed.

If pipe outlets are used in these systems, they should be inspected to ensure that they will still drain as planned and all inlets and outlets are intact. If your terraces and diversions drain into a waterway it should be inspected as well. Any eroded or silted areas should be regraded as needed to restore the original shape of the waterway. Areas that had to be disturbed for regrading should be reseeded to the same grass as was originally established in the waterway.

All of these practices should be inspected for rodent damage with repairs made as needed. Some of these practices can be inspected during harvest which will help save some time as well as figure out how much time to allow for repair.

So far we have discussed practices in cropland fields, but we should also think about any rangeland practices that have been installed. Some of the practices that come to mind are livestock pipelines and tanks.

Pipelines should be inspected for areas of backfill that have settled or washed out. These areas should be restored as needed to maintain the designed buried depth of pipeline to avoid freezing. All of the air vents and hydrants should be inspected for leaks, which should be repaired as needed. They also should not be washed out to expose critical parts to freezing. If you are done using the line for the season, this would be a good time to drain any components that could freeze.

The tanks should have fill added around the perimeter as needed to correct any erosion or cattle trails. The float valve and overflow should be inspected to insure that they are operating properly. The small animal escape ramp should be inspected that it is still attached and placed as planned.

All cross fences should be inspected and repaired as would be done with the perimeter fence. Proper maintenance of conservation practices is critical, just as with maintenance of your farm machinery. Taking the time to evaluate and repair your conservation practices will keep your practices "running" for a long time.

For more information, visit the Kansas NRCS Web site www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs or your local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.