



# Horticulture Newsletter

**August 25, 2026**

**KANSAS STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

Horticulture and  
Natural Resources

## Video of the Week:



Many herbs can grow well in Kansas, and can bring tremendous flavor and vibrance to our food. When it comes to harvesting these herbs, however, it is important to use the techniques that will preserve and maximize both the flavor and lifespan of our fresh herbs. [This week's video covers how to harvest fresh herbs](#), including the proper time to harvest and various techniques for storing those fresh herbs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQmc9GmvkvY>

## Announcements:

### **September K-State Garden Hour:**

Join us next week, on Wednesday, September 2, 2026, for the next K-State Garden Hour webinar on "Garden Renewal--How to Divide and Transplant Like a Pro". The presentation will be live from Noon to 1pm. Discover how dividing and transplanting plants is a critical skill to promote healthy plant growth. Dividing perennials also provides a great opportunity to share plants with others, and increase the number of successful plants in your own garden. Register to join us live, or view the recording afterwards online at: <https://ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour>



#KSTATEGARDENHOUR

### K-STATE GARDEN HOUR

**Garden Renewal:  
How To Divide & Transplant Like A Pro**

Wednesday, September 2nd 12:00PM -1:00PM CST

Rejuvenate your garden and give it a fresh start. Dividing and transplanting plants is a critical skill to promote plant growth and maintain a healthy landscape. Join Travis Carmichael, Lyon County Horticulture Agent, as he shares tips for the best timing, tools, and techniques to ensure your landscape plants thrive. This webinar is perfect for gardeners looking to rejuvenate their spaces and share plants with others.

 Register Here!

Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at:  
[ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour](https://ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour)

**KANSAS STATE**  
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Extension

## **Garden Calendar:**

- Place nets over ripening fruit to protect from hungry birds.
- Turn the compost pile and add water when dry.
- Sow hollyhock, poppy, and larkspur seeds for spring blooms.
- Prepare for fall bulb planting by making orders or researching varieties.
- Take cuttings from geraniums and begonias for overwintering indoors.
- Be on the look out for grubs and apply proper control methods.
- Check sharpness of mower blades and repair as needed.
- Hand-remove bagworms. Feeding has likely stopped for the year, and insecticides are no longer effective.
- Prune broken, dead or crossing tree limbs for healthier plants.
- Check houseplants for insects such as scales, aphids, and spider mites.

## **Fruit:**

### **Harvesting Pears:**

Fruiting pears are typically ready for harvest from August through October in Kansas, depending on the variety. While most types of fruit are best if left to ripen on the vine, the same cannot be said for pears. When pears are left to ripen on the tree, they often develop a gritty or mealy texture that makes the fruit less desirable. Fruit that ripens on the tree also has a shortened shelf life, often developing soft, brown centers. As a result, pears are often harvested before they are fully ripe and while the fruit is still hard, in order to develop the best flavor and fruit texture.

Begin to harvest pears when the fruit starts to change colors. Look for pears that lighten in color, developing a pale green or yellowish-green color. On some pear varieties, the color of the spots on the fruit, known as lenticels, can also be evaluated. Lenticels are tiny openings in the plant that allow for gas exchange. On immature pears, these lenticels will be white or greenish-white. As the fruit matures, the lenticels will turn brown when it is time to harvest.

As pears reach harvest time, the fruit develops a smoother, waxy coating and a classic “pear” aroma. At this point, the fruit will easily separate from the branch when the fruit is twisted.



To harvest pears, carefully lift the fruit at an angle and twist to separate the fruit from the tree. Avoid damaging the twig where it is attached because that may negatively impact fruit development next year.

Finish ripening harvested pears indoors, in temperatures below 75°F. Refrigerate pears at 31-50°F with high humidity (ideally in a perforated bag to maximize humidity and avoid excess water accumulation) for two days to several weeks, depending on the variety and how quickly you plan to use the fruit. Remove pears from cold storage and allow them to sit at 60-65°F for one to three weeks to finish ripening. Avoid allowing pears to ripen in environments warmer than this, as fruit may rot instead of ripening.

Harvesting pears at maturity but before peak ripeness, along with an appropriate chilling period, will bring out the best sweetness, flavor, and texture in your pears.

## Flowers:

### **Fertilizing Annual Flowers:**

Annual flowers are some of the hardest-working plants in the landscape, producing continuous blooms from spring until frost under ideal conditions. To keep annuals flowering at their best, proper water and fertilization is essential.

The success of an annual flower bed begins at planting. A soil test should be conducted prior to planting in order to determine the nutrient needs of the soil. Soil preparations routinely include adding both organic matter and fertilizer into the soil before planting.



If the results of a soil test are not available at planting, apply a balanced fertilizer, such as a 10-10-10 or 20-20-20 fertilizer, according to label instructions. In addition, 2 to 3 inches of organic matter (such as compost) should be incorporated into the soil of most flowerbeds before planting. This helps improve both soil structure and nutrient availability. Mix both fertilizers and organic matter into the existing soil to a depth of 6-inches before planting.

While these soil amendments create the basis for a healthy soil, it is important to continue to supply additional nutrients as needed throughout the growing season. For most plants, nitrogen will be the limiting factor for abundant bloom production. This is because most flowers are produced on new growth of our annual plants. The more new growth most annuals produce, the more flowers they will also likely have. While phosphorus and potassium are also essential in flower production, most Kansas soils will supply adequate amounts of these nutrients for healthy annual growth.



If fertilizers were incorporated into the soil at planting, wait 4 to 6 weeks before making additional fertilizer applications. At that time additional nitrogen can be supplied using slow-release fertilizers, organic side-dressings, or water-soluble products for the remainder of the growing season (May through October). Often water-soluble fertilizers are the least expensive and most commonly used form of annual flower fertilizer. Which formulation you choose, however, will depend on what you are growing and how frequently you plan to apply fertilizers.

When evaluating the nutrient ratios on the fertilizer bag (the three numbers on the label), look for a nutrient combination that is a 3-1-2 ratio. For example, a 15-5-10 fertilizer. Since annuals bloom on new growth and are most often limited by nitrogen availability, look for a fertilizer with a nitrogen range of 8 to 20% (this is indicated on the fertilizer bag when the first of three numbers is between 8 and 20). This nitrogen range has been found to produce the most blooms. It is acceptable to use lawn fertilizers to fertilize your annual flowers, just ensure that these fertilizers do not contain weed killers or other added products.

The more fertilizer applied, the more flowers gardeners can expect (up to a point, of course). Fertilizers can be applied as often as once per week, or as infrequently as every 4-6 weeks. For most gardeners, fertilizing every



two to four weeks during the growing season, beginning one month after planting, is achievable and adequate for productive annual flowers. Hanging basket and container grown annuals may require weekly applications of a water-soluble fertilizer.

While annual flowers are considered heavy nutrient feeders, avoid fertilizing more frequently than once per week. Even though fertilizers are beneficial to annual flower growth, too much fertilization can damage plants and result in poor performance.

Keep in mind that in addition to fertilizer, regular watering is also important for the overall performance of our annual flowers. Do not fertilize plants when they are drought stressed or wilted. Instead, water plants thoroughly and return the following day to fertilize after they have recovered. In addition to providing moisture to the plant, regular watering also helps to flush excess salts from the soil that may accumulate during the fertilization process.

## **Turf:**

### **Understanding The Grass Seed Label:**

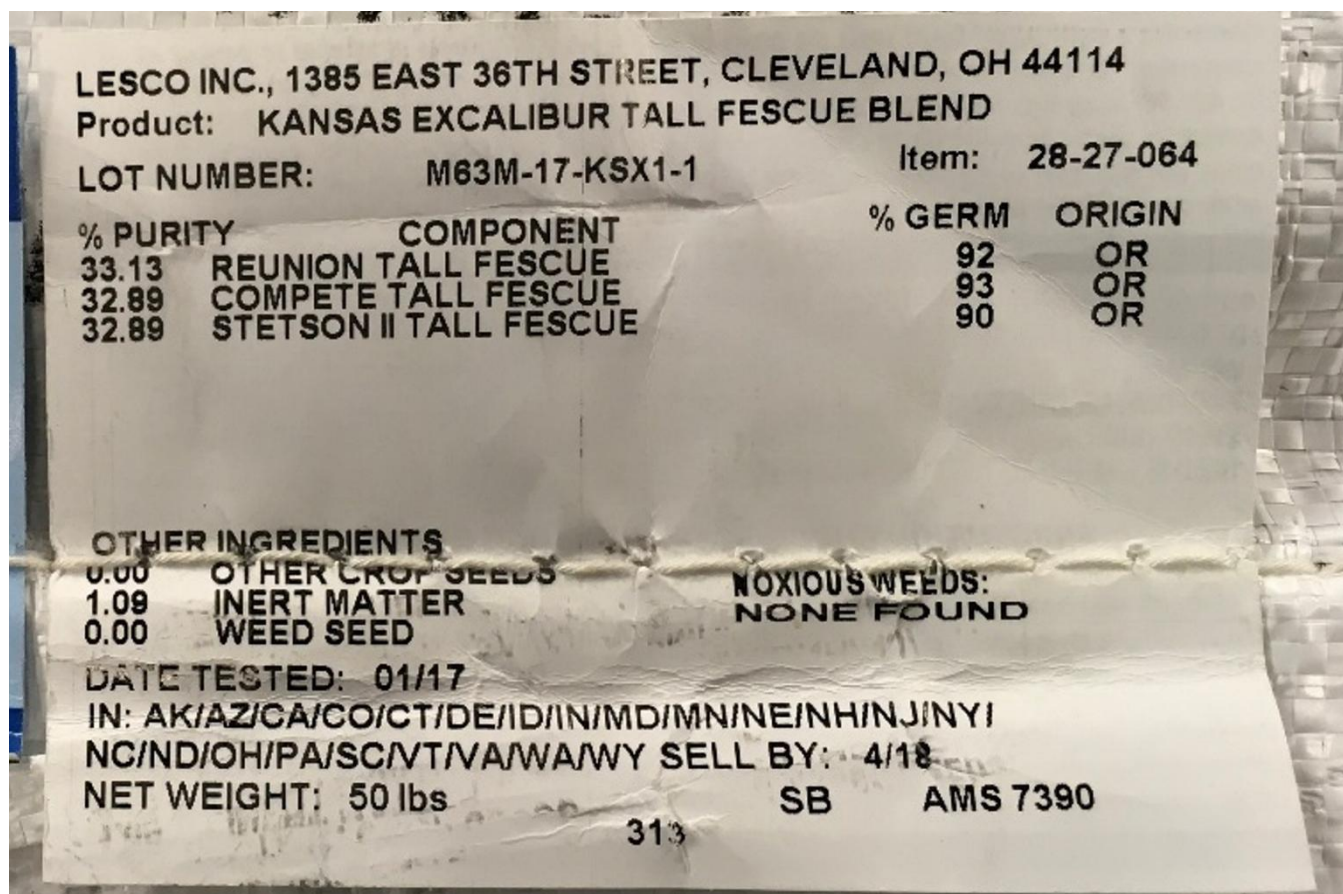
Fall planting of grass seed is close at hand (now through October 15<sup>th</sup>), and whether you plan to overseed bare spots or completely start over planting a new lawn, selecting a high-quality grass seed is the number one most important step for success. In fact, the grass seed you select can make or break the success of your lawn the rest of the year. Not all grass seed is created equally. If you unintentionally select seed that is not well suited to Kansas, you limit your lawn's potential success before you even start.

When purchasing grass seed it is important to make your purchase based on what is in the bag, not on it. Do not be swayed by fancy branding, buzzwords, or colorful bags. What is important in that bag of grass seed is what is on the seed label.

The seed label is most often located on the top of the bag, or on the backside of the bag. It is required by law and regulated by the Kansas Department of Agriculture. A seed label must be truthful in what the product contains, and as a result, is the most important information to look for when purchasing grass seed this fall. Here are the most important parts of a seed label that you will need to understand and look for:

- **Component/Kind/Variety:** This tells you the actual type of plant that will grow from the seeds in the bag. For most of Kansas, Tall Fescue will be the only type of grass seed we want to intentionally plant this fall. In good fall planted grass seed, we ideally want to look for three to five different varieties of Tall Fescue, or what is referred to as a tall fescue blend. This genetic variability helps to allow some varieties





to perform better in the shade, while others may have more disease resistance or drought tolerance. Avoid other types of grass seed such as annual ryegrass, perennial ryegrass, bluegrass, fine fescue, or creeping red fescue. For most of Kansas, these other types of grass seed will not have the heat and drought tolerance necessary to survive the summer.

- **% Purity:** When multiple species or varieties of turfgrass are combined in the same bag, this number tells you the proportion of each seed type (by weight) relative to the others in the mix. Ideally look for tall fescue blends that have similar ratios of each turfgrass variety.
- **Germination %:** For each species or variety of turfgrass in the bag, this number represents what percentage of those seeds will be capable of growing into the desired plant. The larger this number is, the better. The germination rate will usually never be 100%, as it is unrealistic to guarantee every single seed in that bag is viable and able to grow. Instead, look for germination rates of 90% or greater. This will indicate high-quality seed that is likely to grow when planted.
- **Weed Seed %:** This number represents the amount of weed seeds, by weight, included in the seed bag. It is important to emphasize that this percentage is based on the overall weight of the bag. As compared to grass seeds, many weed seeds are much smaller (some are almost dust like) and have very little weight. This means that even at extremely low percentages, the number of weed seeds may outnumber the grass seeds in a bag. Because of this, less than ½ of 1% of weed seed can ruin a bag of seed. High-quality grass seed will have 0.01% or less weed seed. Ideally look for grass seed with 0.00% weed seed, even if the cost of seed is higher, in order to prevent planting weeds with the grass seed.

- **Other Crop Seed %:** This number includes the weight of all other kinds and varieties of agricultural seeds not specifically named on the label. The types of "other crops" included in the bag do not have to be specifically listed on the seed label by name unless a species makes up 5% or more of the total weight of the bag. This means that there is usually no way of knowing what the "other crop" is. It may be something relatively harmless (like annual ryegrass), or it may be something difficult to control (such as rough bluegrass or orchardgrass). Just like with "weed seed," ideally the percentage of "other crop" should be as close to zero as possible. High-quality grass seed will have 0.01% or less of other crop. Ideally, look for grass seed with 0.00% other crop, even if the cost of seed is higher, in order to prevent planting weeds with the grass seed.
- **Inert Matter:** This includes anything in the bag that is not a seed. This may include seed hulls, broken seeds, soil, sand, and other plant debris. While these materials add weight, they do not contribute to establishing a lawn. Often, inert matter may be intentionally added to help prevent grass seed from sticking together and allow seeds to be more easily spread.
- **Test Date:** This is the date when the germination % was determined. The older the date, the lower the actual germination % may currently be. By law, this date cannot be more than 9 months old prior to sale, not counting the month it was tested.
- **Certified Seed:** Some grass seeds will include a blue label that says "certified seeds." This label indicates that the known variety of seed listed on the label has been inspected and found to be genetically pure. This ensures that the original qualities and desired characteristics of each variety (such as yield, vigor, and disease resistance) will still be evident in the plant that grows from this seed.



While each seed label is required to have this information, each label may present this information in a slightly different format. Be sure to read the seed label carefully.

By reviewing these portions of a seed label before purchasing grass seed, you can be confident in your purchase of a high-quality grass seed. [Visit the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Understanding A Seed Label publication](#) for more information on seed labels:

<https://www.agriculture.ks.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/7522/638470020693070000>

## **Trees & Shrubs:**

### **Environmental Stress And Leaf Scorch On Plants:**

With recent heat and drought conditions across much of the state, environmental stress is becoming increasingly more visible on plants, especially trees and shrubs. One of the classic symptoms of environmental stress is leaf scorch.



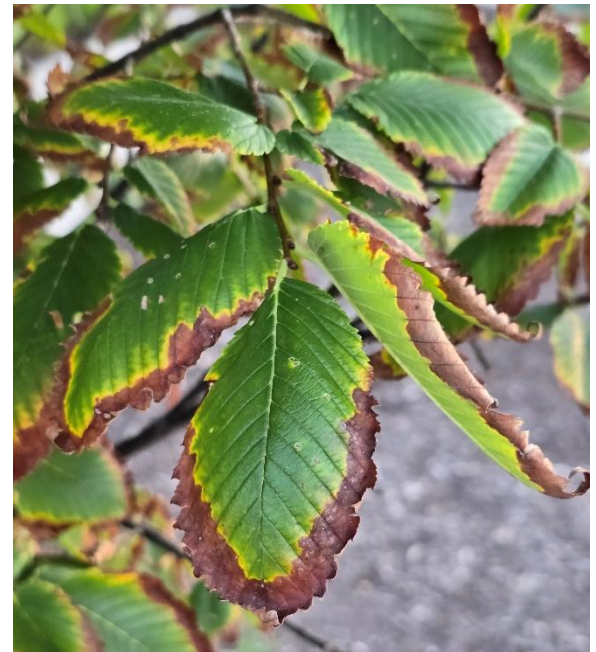
Environmental leaf scorch symptoms appear as browning or blackening of the leaf tissue. Symptoms often begin at the tip of the leaf, or along the margins (edges) of the leaf. Browning can also occur in the open area of leaf tissue in between the veins. Over time, the scorched areas become larger and larger, progressing inward on the leaf as environmental stress persists. Eventually, the entire leaf may turn brown or drop prematurely from the tree, shrub, or plant. Symptoms may appear evenly distributed throughout the plant, or on one predominant side of the plant.

Pre-mature fall color can also be associated with environmental stress.

Though environmental leaf scorch is most commonly associated with drought conditions, it can appear when too much water is present as well. This time of year, however, most leaf scorch is caused by water being pulled from the leaf faster than the roots of the plant can absorb water and replace it. This rapid moisture loss in the leaf leads to drying and desiccation of the leaf tissue, resulting in scorch. The tips of the leaf, margins of the leaf, and areas in between leaf veins are the furthest point in the leaf that water has to travel to reach, which explains why when water is limited, these are the first areas to develop scorch symptoms.

Often extreme weather events can be the sole cause of environmental leaf scorch, however, other growing conditions on the site may also compound the issue or predispose plants to damage. It is important to try to identify and correct as many possible sources of environmental stress on the plant as possible. Examples of environmental stresses could include:

- Heat and extreme temperatures
- Drought conditions or flooding
- Hot, drying winds
- Abrupt changes in weather conditions
- Trees with no visible root flare (planted too deep or buried)
- Competition with other plants for limited water availability (such as grass growing up against a tree trunk)
- Nutrient or pH issues in the soil
- Soil compaction
- Damaged roots (construction, flooding, etc.)
- Bark damage along the trunk, branches, or root flare
- Splits or cracks in the wood
- Girdling or restrictions of trunk/branch growth (from plant tags, staking, bird feeders, etc.)
- Limited soil area (plants often surrounded by paved surfaces or buildings)
- Insect or disease damage





Although not all of these stress factors are within a homeowner's power to control, identifying and reducing as many possible sources of stress on a plant will help reduce leaf scorch on the plant long term.

In the short term, if conditions are dry, a slow, deep soaking (12 - 18 inches deep) of the soil in the root zone of the plant should be completed. Apply the water to the root zone slowly, potentially using a slow trickle from a garden hose over several hours, to allow the moisture to soak deep into the soil.

[Visit our environmental leaf scorch fact sheet](https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/common-pest-problems/documents/Scorch.pdf) to learn more about this problem, and ways to boost plant health: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/common-pest-problems/documents/Scorch.pdf>

## **Miscellaneous:**

### **Tick Talk: Six Common Tick Questions And What One K-State Expert Has To Say**

For many, longer days and warmer weather mean more time outside. Whether hitting the trails or spending time in the backyard, extra hours outdoors have plenty of benefits. They also welcome unwanted visitors: ticks.

A little knowledge can go a long way toward staying prepared and staying safe during the height of tick season. [Cassandra Olds](#), assistant professor in Kansas State University's Department of Entomology, shares what you should know.

#### **#1. Do ticks jump or fly?**

No — in fact, they don't like moving much at all.

Many ticks can't see. Instead, they use Haller's organs — or leg sensors — to locate hosts and navigate their environment. Once they've sensed a host they like, they release from their sitting place and attach.

"If I put a tick in the corner of this room, it's going to stay in that corner. They don't find you but instead wait for you to find it," Olds said. "That's why they sometimes look like they're dancing and waving their legs around; they're busy smelling the air."

In addition to not flying or jumping, ticks don't normally fall from trees, contrary to popular belief, Olds said.

"Ticks just like wooded areas. Since trees release water vapor, and a tick's biggest fear is drying out, we tend to find them around trees," she said. "But they're not falling or jumping from them. If you find a tick on your head or neck, it most likely found your leg and crawled its way up."

*In short: Ticks don't jump or fly; they wait for a host to brush by to attach.*

#### **#2. Why are there so many ticks lately?**

Temperature drives most aspects of ticks and insects.

Ticks have a relatively long life cycle, with the journey from larva to adulthood taking around two to three years. Pair this with rising temperatures and humidity, Olds says, and there are more ticks. Why? While ticks are still hatching, they aren't dying.

"Winter kills off a lot of ticks. We've had milder winters these past few years, so fewer ticks have frozen and died, but they're still mating," she said.

The list of favorable tick conditions doesn't end there; warmer temperatures and higher rainfall also lead to increased grass growth, providing further protection for ticks. This is also why tick populations are large in subtropical regions near the equator.

Finally, increased awareness and activity together have made people more tuned in to tick news....

*In short: Mild winters, increased heat and humidity, and growth in awareness have all contributed to more noticeable tick activity.*

### **#3. How do you check for and remove ticks?**

Each type of tick tends to prefer different attachment sites, but in general, Olds says they gravitate toward warm, tight and moist areas of the body....

After spending time outdoors, Olds recommends placing your clothes directly into the washer and performing a thorough tick check, paying close attention to your scalp and hairline. If possible, ask someone to check areas that are difficult to see.



If you find a tick, remove it as soon as possible. No extreme measures are necessary. Olds recommends simply pulling it off.

"Don't agitate it, which means don't smother or burn it. That can cause the tick to burrow deeper or become crushed, which may cause it to regurgitate more saliva and increase your risk of infection," she said. "Your fingers give you the best grip, but use tweezers if you aren't comfortable using your hands. Grab the tick as close to the skin as possible, apply steady pressure and pull straight away."

Once you've removed the tick, place it in a resealable plastic bag and store it in the freezer. Keeping the tick makes it easier to accurately identify the species and determine which diseases it may carry, narrowing the list of symptoms to watch for. If you're concerned about disease transmission, you can also have the tick tested for pathogens.

*In short: Wash clothes immediately after time spent outdoors, and check your body and pets thoroughly. If you find a tick, don't agitate it; use your fingers to quickly pull it straight out.*

#### **#4. If I get a tick bite, will I get sick?**

Not necessarily.

The best way to reduce the risk of a tick-borne illness is to remove a tick before it latches onto the skin. If a tick has already attached, remove it as quickly as possible. In general, the longer a tick remains attached, the greater the chance it will transmit disease through its saliva.

However, a tick bite doesn't always lead to illness.... The risk depends on the tick species and the disease involved....

While there's no universal timeline for when a tick can transmit disease, bite prevention and prompt removal remain the best ways to reduce your risk of illness.

*In short: A tick bite doesn't always mean getting sick — illness risk depends on the tick species and the disease it carries, how quickly the tick is removed, and the body's response to foreign material in its saliva.*

#### **#5. How can I protect my pet from ticks?**

For domestic pets that spend time outdoors, regular time in the backyard is generally not a major concern. However, after hikes or walks on wooded trails, Olds recommends thoroughly checking pets for ticks, paying close attention to the ears, head, under the legs and around the tail.

Pets... should stay up to date on routine flea and tick prevention. While many over-the-counter and natural products are available, Olds recommends using veterinarian-prescribed treatments....

*In short: Use veterinarian-recommended tick prevention and check pets thoroughly after outdoor activities. Avoid products that contain any pet allergens or toxins.*

#### **#6. How can I prevent my livestock from ticks?**

For livestock, tick prevention depends on several factors, including the size of the operation, the number of animals, how often they can be checked and local tick populations. Because of those variables, Olds said there is no universal approach to tick control.

Horse owners, in particular, should keep tick prevention top of mind. Because horses have sensitive skin, Olds recommends staying up to date on veterinarian-recommended tick-control products. Daily application of newer bio-based repellents can also help reduce tick exposure when horses can be handled regularly....

*In short: Tick prevention for livestock depends on the animals, operation and local risks. Management plans should be tailored to each operation.*

Written by Abbigail Marshall, with K-State News and Communications Services on Wednesday, August 12, 2026, and shortened and adapted from the [K-State Today News Article](https://www.k-state.edu/news/articles/2026/08/tick-questions-do-they-jump-fly-how-to-check-remove.html) for the Horticulture Newsletter. To read the full article, visit: <https://www.k-state.edu/news/articles/2026/08/tick-questions-do-they-jump-fly-how-to-check-remove.html>

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