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Robertson County Agriculture & Natural Resources **Newsletter** July 2025

The Robertson County Extension Office will be closed on July 4th in Observance to Independence Day.

Changes to Livestock Risk Protection Insurance for the Upcoming Reinsirance Year

Dr. Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky

Over the last several years, I have focused a large share of my Extension program on Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) Insurance as a price risk management tool for feeder cattle. While there are a lot of tools and strategies available, LRP has several advantages including subsidized premiums and the ability to cover most any quantity of cattle. It has been made more attractive in recent years through increased subsidy levels and allowing for premiums to be paid after policy ending dates. Changes to federal insurance programs are very common, but several LRP changes for the 2026 reinsurance year were significant and I wanted to briefly talk about a few of them this week. These changes will impact policies that are effective starting July 1, 2025.

Forward Priced Cattle

In the past, cattle had to be in one's physical possession to be covered by LRP. With the new insurance year, forward contracted cattle can be covered prior to the insured having physical possession of them. The insured must have physical possession of the cattle during the insurance period and receive those cattle at least 90 days before the ending date of the policy. This will allow individuals to purchase LRP insurance on cattle for which they bear price risk but are still at the location of the seller. This will be attractive to margin operators that purchase cattle via forward contract (or purchase agreement) to be sold later as feeders or fed cattle. There is also potential benefit to the seller of the forward priced cattle as the ability to utilize LRP sooner may impact buyer interest.

Unborn Calves and Cull Dairy Cows

Two new coverage types were added for which LRP coverage can be purchased. A type was added for "unborn calves" intended to be sold within two weeks of birth. Both beef and beef-on-dairy cross calves can be covered, and unborn calves have a target weight range of 60-99 lbs. Full dairy calves must still be covered under the unborn, predominantly dairy type. Calves covered as "unborn calves" must be sold within 30 days (before or after) the SCE (Specific Coverage Endorsement) ending date. While beef calves are included, this category is largely intended for beef-on-dairy cross calves as they are often sold at a very young age and have values that differ substantially from full dairy calves. A new type was also added for cull dairy cows, which can be used to protect the value of dairy cows that are being removed from the herd and entering the beef system.

Drought Hardship Exemption

Currently, feeder cattle may not be sold any earlier than 60 days prior to the ending date of the LRP SCE for an indemnity to be received. For the 2026 reinsurance year, a drought hardship exemption has been added that will allow producers to keep coverage on cattle sold more than 60 days before the ending date of the SCE if the covered cattle are in a county experiencing a drought and drought conditions worsen after entering the SCE.

Drought conditions are quantified using the Drought Severity and Coverage Index (DSCI), which is based on US Drought Monitor (USDM) data. There are 6 drought levels estimated weekly to quantify how severe drought conditions are in each area – none, Abnormally Dry (D0), Moderate (D1), Severe (D2), Extreme (D3), and Exceptional (D4). DSCI is a weighted summation of the percentage of a county in each designation multiplied by a weight factor that assigns a higher number to more severe drought as follows: $DSCI = (1 \times \%D0) + (2 \times \%D1) + (3 \times \%D2) + (4 \times \%D3) + (5 \times \%D4)$. For example, if the entire area were in Exceptional drought, the associated DSCI would be 500 (100% x 5). If half of the area were in D5 and half were in D4, the associated DSCI would be 450 ((50% x 5) + (50% x 4)). To be eligible for the drought hardship exemption, the DSCI must exceed 200 and must have increased by 150 since the effective date of the LRP policy.

Prohibition of Subsidy Capture

Language is now included that specifically states that activity intended to financially gain from the capture of premium subsidy is considered abuse of the program. Insureds are required to provide brokerage records if requested by RMA to determine if abuse occurred. There is also language that describes practices that are presumed to be subsidy capture. Examples of this would include selling a put option very close to the effective date of an LRP SCE that also expires very close to the ending date of that SCE at a premium of more than 80% of the SCE premium. Similar language is also included for creating a short synthetic put by buying futures and selling a call option.

While there is very specific language on what would be presumed to be subsidy capture, it will have virtually no impact on those employing normal risk management strategies. For example, if a producer wanted to use LRP as the lower end of a fence and write an out-of-the-money call option to offset some of the premium cost, they can still do so. And if a producer purchased LRP but saw the market swing much higher over the next couple of months, they could purchase a put option to re-establish a higher price floor. The subsidy capture language is just intended to eliminate abuse of the program and ensure that LRP is being used as a true risk management tool.

Livestock Risk Protection insurance continues to evolve as a risk management tool for livestock producers. The purpose of this article was to focus on some of the more significant changes to LRP for the 2026 reinsurance year. There were some other changes that were not discussed and many specifics that were not covered. Readers are encouraged to engage with an insurance professional for more specific information and guidance. Most importantly, producers should give careful consideration to risk management strategies and whatever tools they feel are most appropriate for their operation.

Early Blight & Septoria Leaf Spot of Tomato

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

Early blight and Septoria leaf spot are the most common diseases of tomato in Kentucky. Tomatoes produced in greenhouses and high tunnels may also experience disease. These diseases may occur individually or together. While early blight and Septoria leaf spot rarely result in plant death, the damage caused to leaves and fruit impacts overall yield and produce quality. Cultural and sanitation practices can help reduce severity of these diseases, but fungicides may be needed to protect plants from infection.

Early Blight Facts

Symptoms first appear on older leaves as small, brown lesions, which over time expand and develop a concentric ring (bullseye) pattern (Figure 1). Disease spreads upward and lesions develop on newer growth as disease progresses. Lesions may merge together resulting in a rapid dieback of plant tissue. Fruit may also become infected. Affected fruit develop dark, brown to black lesions with concentric ring patterns near the stem attachment point (Figure 2).

- Disease overwinters in plant debris left over from the previous season.
- Early blight spreads when spores are carried by water, such as irrigation and rain splash.
- Warm, wet conditions and periods of high humidity favor disease development.
- Fruit infected in the field can develop symptoms in storage and shorten shelf-life.
- Early blight is caused by the fungal pathogen Alternaria linariae, which can infect other solanaceous hosts and some cucurbits.

Septoria Leaf Spot Facts

Symptoms first appear as small circular lesions with tan-brown centers on older leaves (Figure 3) and lower portions of stems. Over time disease progresses up the plant to new growth. As disease spreads, leaves may begin to die back rapidly. However, individually, lesions can still be observed. During periods of high humidity, small, black reproductive structures (pycnidia) may be seen in centers of spots. Septoria leaf spot does not affect fruit.

- Disease overwinters in plant debris left from the previous season.
- Septoria leaf spot is spread by water, such as irrigation and rain.
- Warm, wet conditions and periods of high humidity favor disease development.
- Septoria leaf spot is caused by the fungal pathogen Septoria lycopersici, which can also infect a wide range of solanaceous hosts.

Management

- Purchase certified disease-free seeds or transplants
- Utilize cultivars with resistance or tolerance to diseases
- Manage weeds in and near plantings, especially nightshades and other solanaceous weeds
- Rotate crops
- Increase plant spacing
- Apply mulch layer
- Remove and destroy infected plants or plant parts
- Avoid overhead watering
- Clean and sanitize tools, pots, and equipment
- Remove and destroy plant debris at the end of the season





Managing your herd's pinkeye long before the first 'bad eye' of the season

Source: Michelle Arnold, DVM (University of Kentucky Ruminant Extension Veterinarian, Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory)

Pinkeye, or Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (IBK), is one of the most frustrating and costly diseases beef producers face. It negatively affects weaning weights, increases treatment costs and leads to discounts at sale due to corneal scarring. While it spreads quickly once it starts, the key to managing pinkeye lies in reducing risk—long before the first bad eye of the season.



Understanding the Disease

Pinkeye is caused by a complex mix of bacteria, most notably Moraxella bovis, Moraxella bovoculi, and Mycoplasma bovoculi. These organisms can live harmlessly in the eye until certain conditions—like eye injury or irritation—trigger them to become aggressive. M. bovis, for example, uses hairlike pili to attach to damaged corneas and releases toxins that destroy corneal tissue —leading to painful ulcers.

New research shows that pinkeye involves more than just one bacterium, making vaccine development difficult. Some strains are considered harmless, while others are highly virulent and resistant to antibiotics.

Reducing Risk Starts Early

Reducing the risk of pinkeye begins with strengthening your herd's natural defenses. Good nutrition, especially adequate levels of trace minerals like selenium and copper, is essential. Clean, cool water helps maintain hydration and tear production, which protects the eye. Avoid stagnant water sources and regularly clean automatic waterers.

Environmental irritants are major contributors. Dust, ultraviolet (UV) rays, tall weeds and seed heads can all damage the eye, making it possible for bacteria to take hold. White-faced breeds like Herefords are more susceptible due to increased UV reflection to the eye's surface. Providing shade and mowing pastures can help reduce these risks.

Face Fly Control

Face flies are the primary transmitters of pinkeye bacteria. They feed on eye secretions and can spread infection from animal to animal. Unlike horn flies, face flies aren't affected by systemic insecticides. Instead, use a combination of feed-through insect growth regulators (IGRs), insecticide ear tags, dust bags and back rubbers strategically placed in high-traffic areas.

Start IGRs in mid-spring, about 30 days before fly season, and continue until 30 days after it ends. Rotate insecticide products annually, based on mode of action (MOA), to prevent resistance. Aim to keep face fly numbers below 10 per head.

Recognizing Symptoms and Acting Fast

Early signs of pinkeye may include excessive tearing, squinting and blinking. Prompt treatment is critical to prevent spread and minimize damage. Long-acting injectable antibiotics like oxytetracycline (LA-300®) or tulathromycin (Draxxin®) are effective and labeled for pinkeye treatment. In severe cases, eye patches or surgical procedures may be needed to protect the cornea.

Topical fly repellents and isolating affected animals can also help reduce transmission. Always consult your veterinarian for treatment decisions and prescriptions.

The Role of Vaccines

Vaccines can reduce the number and severity of cases but aren't foolproof. Commercial vaccines work best when the strain in the vaccine matches the strain in your herd. When they don't, custom-made (autogenous) vaccines may be more effective.

Timing is key-start vaccinations 4-6 weeks before pinkeye season and follow up with a booster for full protection.

Pinkeye is a complex disease, but control is possible with a proactive approach. Focus on nutrition, clean water, fly control and minimizing eye irritants. Work closely with your veterinarian to develop a treatment and vaccination plan tailored to your herd. With early action and consistent management, you can reduce the impact of pinkeye and keep your cattle healthy and productive.

DATE	PROGRAM	LOCATION
JUNE 26	ELDERBERRY PRODUCTION 6:00 PM	FLEMING CO. EXT OFFICE
JULY 8	CUT FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS 5:00 PM \$20 REGISTRATION FEE	ROBERTSON CO. EXT OFFICE
AUGUST 4 — AUGUST 9	GERMANTOWN FAIR	
AUGUST 14 — AUGUST 24	KENTUCKY STATE FAIR	
SEPTEMBER 4	ROBERTSON COUNTY LIVESTOCK SHOW AND SALE	ROBERTSON COUNTY AG BARN

June Forage Tips

- Continue hay harvests. Minimize storage losses by storing hay under cover.
- Clip pastures for weeds and seedheads as needed.
- Start to slow grazing rotations allowing for a longer recovery period.
- Use portable fencing to decrease paddock size and increase paddock number.
- Do NOT graze below the minimum desired residual height.
- If present, johnsongrass can provide high quality summer forage when grazed or cut at a vegetative stage.
- Crabgrass, a warm-season annual grass, can provide high quality summer grazing. If desired, remember crabgrass needs some annual soil disturbance to keep coming back.
- Begin grazing native warm-season grasses. Start at 18-20" and stop at 8-10".

Strawberry Cheesecake Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
- 1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries
- 1/2 cup low-fat milk
- 1/2 cup ice
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)
- 1/2 sheet graham crackers or 3-5 pretzels, crushed

Directions:

- 1. Wash hands with warm water and soap, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
- 2. Place cottage cheese, strawberries, milk, ice, and vanilla extract in a blender.
- 3. Blend until smooth and creamy.
- 4. Pour into two cups and top with crushed graham crackers or pretzels. Serve and enjoy.
- 5. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

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The summer months are already starting to fly by! Here at

the Extension Office we have been very busy planning for

youth programs that happen throughout the summer, which

includes 4-H Camp. This year Robertson County will be

taking over 100 people to camp!

We have also been busy doing farm/home visits and also planning fall ANR programs!

Please continue to watch for our newsletters so that you

can stay up to date with everything we have going on!

Samantha Saunders

Robertson County Agriculture & Natural Resources/ 4-H Youth Development Agent

Samantha Saunders

Cooperative Extension Service

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Inside this edition:

- Blue Licks Farmer's Market Locations/ Dates/Times
- Important Dates
- Forage Timely Tips
- Strawberry Cheesecake Smoothie
- Managing your herd's pinkeye long before the first 'bad eye' of the season
- Early Blight & Septoria Leaf Spot of Tomato
- Changes to Livestock Risk Protection Insurance for the Upcoming Reinsirance Year
- Cut Flower Arrangements



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