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CHOOSING YOUR PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

by

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Who is your estate personal representative? He or she is the person you designate to carry out the directions in your will. Other terms are “executor” and “administrator.” The court considers your personal estate representative as a fiduciary in charge of settling a deceased person’s estate.

This responsibility involves much more than just handing out a few items to beneficiaries or writing some checks to empty the deceased’s bank accounts. The list of duties is long and complicated and choosing the wrong person could be disastrous to the estate and your beneficiaries.

Here is a partial list of what the personal representative named in your will be expected by the court to do:

- Carry out written instructions of the decedent relating to his or her body, funeral, and burial arrangements.

- Arrange for the immediate needs of survivors
- Locate the will and other important papers and information
- Make application to probate the will, to terminate joint tenancy, and/or for appointment as personal representative
- Give legal written notice of his or her appointment to heirs and devisees
- Indicate whether a bond has been filed and describe to the court where papers relating to the estate are on file
- Take possession of estate property
- Notify the decedent’s life insurance companies.
- Pay expenses for last illness, funeral and burial expenses, and other outstanding debts
- Have real and personal property appraised
- Prepare an inventory of all of the decedent’s property
- Publish a notice to creditors for debts of which the personal representative may be unaware
- Prepare and file a federal estate tax return if the estate is subject to estate tax
- Prepare and file a federal income tax return for the decedent’s last year of life and, if necessary, for the estate
- Arrange for care or guardianship of minor children and any other incapacitated family members
- Determine which estate assets will be needed to pay federal estate taxes, administration expenses and other costs of settling the estate

- Satisfy charitable pledges in the decedent's will
- Ascertain values at the date of death for all of the decedent's bank accounts. Depending on circumstances, close those accounts and open an estate account
- Deposit or invest liquid assets of the estate in federally insured interest-bearing accounts, readily marketable secured loan arrangements or other prudent investments, if funds are not needed to meet debts and expenses currently payable
- Notify various state and federal agencies of the decedent's death and discontinue automatic deposits into and debits from decedent's accounts
- Receive payments due the decedent and estate (dividends, unpaid wages, other benefits)
- File all required documents with the probate court in a timely manner
- Finally, distribute assets to the beneficiaries as required by law for intestate succession (no will) or by decedent's will

Settling even a simple estate often takes significant time and effort. Because the personal representative is a legal "fiduciary," they are required to post a performance bond to cover the value of the estate, until the estate has been settled to the satisfaction of the probate court. This requirement can be prevented if the decedent states in their will that they do not wish for their personal representative to be required to post a bond. If this statement is not present in the will or a will was not prepared, posting of a bond may still be avoided if all beneficiaries sign a waiver to the requirement.

As you can see from the list of duties, the personal representative will be required to put in significant time, effort, and possible travel, over a number of months, and possibly even years, depending on the complexity of the estate. This may cause considerable stress and strain on the personal representative, especially if they have many other business, job, and/or personal responsibilities,

or if there are hard feelings or pressures from beneficiaries and family members. If there are insufficient funds in the estate for reimbursement, the personal representative could also end up paying expenses out of their own pocket.

When thinking about who to name as your personal representative, there are several questions you should ask:

- Will they have sufficient time to carry out the many duties involved?
- Do they live close enough so as not to incur excessive travel time and expense, or do they have the ability and resources to travel to your location to provide sufficient oversight in the process?
- Do you expect them to be of sound mind, health, and ability at the time you pass away?
- There are many legal and financial issues to deal with in addition to the personal issues. Can the person you have in mind adequately deal with all of these issues? It is possible for them to hire an attorney, investment broker, etc. to advise and assist them, but those associated fees will come out of the estate.

As you can see, it is important to choose your personal representative (executor) carefully and thoughtfully.



RADON - What A Gas!



Vicki Hayman: University Extension Educator - Nutrition and Food Safety

Radon

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon is an odorless, tasteless and invisible gas that is produced by the decay of naturally occurring uranium in soil and water.

Radon Exposure

For most people, the greatest exposure to radon comes from their homes. The average indoor radon level is estimated to be about 1.3 picocuries per liter (pCi/L). About 0.4 pCi/L of radon is normally found in the outside air.

Radon-related Health Risks

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in Wyoming. In 2010, there were 295 cases of lung cancer diagnosed in Wyoming residents and 229 deaths due to lung cancer.

Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

Radon exacerbates the damage from smoking and puts smokers at an even higher risk for lung cancer.

Radon Testing

An Elevated Level of Radon is defined as any radon level at or above 4.0 pCi/L. This level is considered an "action" level where mitigation is recommended. However, homes and buildings that have a radon level below 4.0 pCi/L might still pose a health hazard to the occupants.

It is recommended that you test your home for radon every two years, and retest any time you move, make structural changes to your home, or occupy a previously unused level of your home.

Permission to use the Mr. Yuk symbol was granted by the Pittsburgh Poison Center of UPMC Presbyterian/ Shadyside'

Low cost test kits may be obtained online using the following links:

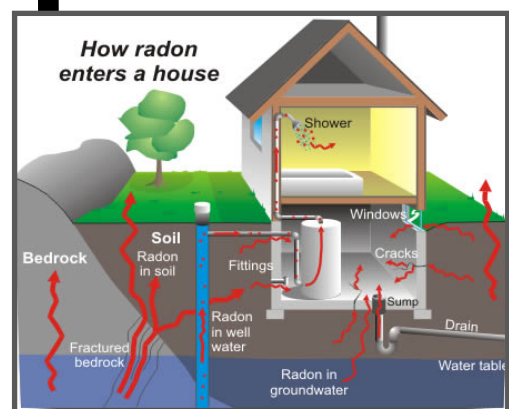
www.wyoming.radon.com

www.drhomeair.com/order/drha_order_wy23.php

www.wyomingradon.org

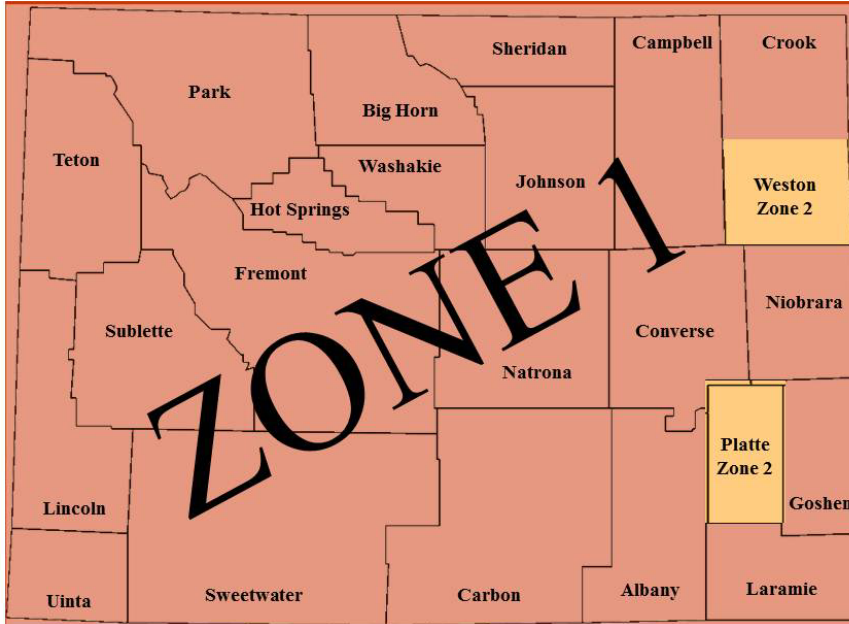
Low cost kits are also available at Campbell, Crook, and Weston County Extension Offices.

The cost per test kit is \$3.00, two kits are \$5.00. Stop by today and pick up one for your home!



RADON - Facts for Wyoming

What A Gas!



What do the colors mean? This information reflects radon “potential” based on EPA and US Geological Survey data for Wyoming and may not correlate to the county-level data below.

- Zone 1** counties have a predicted average indoor radon screening level greater than 4 pCi/L (picocuries per liter) **Highest Potential**
- Zone 2** counties have a predicted average indoor radon screening level between 2 and 4 pCi/L **Moderate Potential**
- Zone 3** counties have a predicted average indoor radon screening level less than 2 pCi/L **Low Potential**

The following county level data is provided by AirChek, Inc.

County	Tested Household Avg. pCi/L
Albany	3.9
Big Horn	3.7
Campbell	4.1
Carbon	2.9
Converse	5.6
Crook	5.9
Fremont	6.6
Goshen	4.1
Hot Springs	4.3
Johnson	4.2
Laramie	3.3
Lincoln	9.3
Natrona	4.6
Niobrara	3.1
Park	4.9
Platte	3.7
Sheridan	6.3
Sublette	4.1
Sweetwater	5.6
Teton	7.2
Uinta	2.6
Washakie	3.2
Weston	8.0

Information quoted is from the Wyoming Department of Health Preventive Health and Safety Section



Sagebrush, A Wyoming Icon

Brian Sebade

Extension Educator for Northeast Wyoming

Sagebrush is one of the most iconic plants populating the west. Found throughout the state, sagebrush is a common and sometimes mundane scene while traveling across Wyoming. Although perhaps not the most interesting backdrop, sagebrush serves an important function in Wyoming ecosystems.

There are many different species of sagebrush found in Wyoming. The different species are found growing everywhere, from low to high elevations and in cold and hot regions. These plants can have woody or non-woody stems. Sagebrush is in the *Artemisia* family, which is known for its ability to easily hybridize. There are currently 21 species and 16 varieties found in Wyoming. Four species are actually introduced, yet survive in Wyoming because of its similar habitat to their origins.



A mule deer buck foraging in a mountain big sagebrush stand during a cold December day.

Common woody species found growing in Wyoming include black sagebrush, big sagebrush, silver sagebrush, fringe sage, and sand sage. Non-woody species include alpine sagebrush, tarragon, field sagewort, and Michaux sagewort. When considering varieties, big sagebrush is an excellent example of hybridization. Big sagebrush has 6 varieties or sub species, four of which are found in Wyoming. Perhaps one of the most well known varieties is Wyoming big sagebrush. This specific subspecies was actually

identified and classified by Dr. Beetle at the University of Wyoming. Other subspecies include mountain big sagebrush, found at high elevations and basin big sagebrush found at lower elevations in most of Wyoming's lowlands.

Sagebrush serves many different purposes, acting as a food source, cover habitat, snow catchment, and soil stabilization.

As a food source, sagebrush serves as a major role during winter months. The plant's leaves stay green through the winter which provides greater nutrition than other dormant plants. As an evergreen, it's estimated crude protein levels are around 11% during crucial winter months. Additionally, the plant's ridged stems help stick out of the snow making them accessible to wildlife. Some studies have suggested that during the winter, sagebrush makes up 100% of sage grouse diets, over 75% of antelope diets, and over 50% for deer and elk in some areas. Livestock, however, do not consume sagebrush in large quantities like that of native ungulates, yet it can serve as a food source during certain times of the year.

Acting as cover, sagebrush serves as a great source of security for wildlife to hide from predators. Basin big sagebrush can range in height from 2 to 13 feet tall which means it can conceal upland game birds, small mammals, and even big game. Birds, including sage grouse, use sagebrush for concealing nests from predators during the spring and summer. This structure also provides much needed thermal cover during cold and windy conditions. Sagebrush can provide excellent habitat for many wildlife species. The height of certain sagebrush plants can often indicate how deep and the quality of a soil. As one might guess the taller the plant, the deeper the soil profile and fertility.

Sagebrush can be a difficult plant to manage depending on what you are trying to accomplish. Reestablishment of sagebrush is often a challenge depending on the location of reclamation. Some species of sagebrush re-sprout but most will not re-sprout if burned

or if the above ground foliage is completely removed. When this happens sagebrush must establish and grow from seed which can be difficult if there is lots of competition from other plants and conditions are not right. For northeast Wyoming this is especially true considering Crook and Weston counties sit on the very edge of sagebrush's domain.

Sagebrush enjoys a spring dominated precipitation pattern, meaning areas that receive lots of snow and rain during the months of April and May with drier conditions during warmer summer months are ideal. The spring moisture pattern provides lots of moisture during the cooler months of sagebrush's growing season and less for other plants to compete during the summer. Eastern Wyoming receives a greater influx of precipitation during the summer from the Gulf of Mexico than western Wyoming. The summer influx of precipitation allows other plants to compete directly with sagebrush while sagebrush is not actively growing be-



Fringed sagebrush, *Artemisia frigida* Willd., is a common sagebrush species found throughout Wyoming.

cause of less than ideal summer temperatures.

If attempting to establish sagebrush, it is important to provide adequate protection of any existing mature plants since they are an excellent seed source. Seeds from existing plants can be harvested to be replanted for establishing new plants, yet this is not always necessary since existing plants can establish new plants easily. For large areas mechanical seeding is needed.

When starting to reseed sagebrush it is important to select a proper seed source. Purchasing seed from a company that is growing their seeds in a similar environment to that of the area you are planning to reseed is essential. If you are reseeding in the Powder River basin you most likely do not want to purchase seed from a company in Western Washington where maternal plants are growing in a much different climate

than Wyoming. Next you will need to decide on a conducive seeding rate, mix, and application. It is suggested that mixing sagebrush with a grass mix is often effective. The seeding rates range from .025 lbs pure live seed (PLS) per acre at 1/8 of an inch for drill seeding and 0.05-0.075 lbs PLS per acre when broadcast seeding.

Seeding in the late fall and early winter is the best time to plant seeds in hopes of stratifying seeds. As pointed out earlier try to mix the seed with native grasses and forbs. Sometimes this can be expensive, but hopefully the native grasses and forbs will reduce competition from invasive plants. The main thing to remember with establishing sagebrush is be patient. Plants take a long time to establish so don't expect to have plants two feet tall at the end of the growing season.

When considering what it takes to establish sagebrush, it is probably hard to think that sagebrush is also difficult to keep thinned at densities desired the greatest range production. Fortunately there are several treatments landowners can use to keep sagebrush at desired densities. Some managers suggest keeping sagebrush at a density of around 400 plants per acre to provide adequate wildlife habitat and range production. Maintaining mosaic patterns with each treatment should also be implemented for providing quality habitat.

Chemical treatment is sometimes an option for controlling sagebrush. Tebuthiuron, is a chemical herbicide that is commonly used for sagebrush control. This chemical disrupts the photosynthetic processes of the plant by eventually killing it. Keep in mind this chemical should be used for thinning and not complete control since it is a non-selective herbicide and will harm other plants too.

Burning is another very effective control methods that can eliminate sagebrush in certain areas, yet is often hard to use for thinning stands. A consideration for prescribed burning is taking note of invasive species nearby that may move into the treated area following the fire. Additional weed control is needed with this method.

The final method and considerations for control is mechanical and stem damage treatments. This includes mowing, chaining, management intensive grazing, and disking. These methods are intended to remove some of the sagebrush foliage and provide a reduced cover. Management intensive grazing is often effective in the spring when woody plants can be damaged from hoof impact with high stocking rates. Treatments that include equipment are more effective with drier soils to provide the full effects of the treatment.

Beef Cow Condition and Breeding

By Blaine Horn, NE Area Range & Forage Management Educator

What factor has the greatest influence on how soon beef cows will rebreed following calving? Their body condition at time of calving.

As all cattle ranchers know the average length of gestation for a cow is 283 days. Thus that leaves 82 days following calving for the cow to rebreed if she is to have another calf by the same time next year. Within these 82 days she first has to repair her reproductive tract from calving before she will experience estrus which can take from 20 to 40 days. How long this postpartum interval (PPI) lasts is influenced by her body condition at time of calving and her nutrition afterwards. A cow in good body condition at time of calving and provided adequate nutrition during early lactation will have a shorter PPI and more readily rebreed within 82 days.

Numerous studies have found that the better the condition the cow is in at time of calving the greater chance she has of rebreeding within 82 days afterwards. A cow in a body condition score (BCS) of 5 or better (see chart for score descriptions) at time of calving has a 95% or better chance of conceiving within 82 days.

The reason for this is that the better condition the cow is in at time of calving the faster her reproductive tract will repair and thus the sooner she is able to undergo estrus as noted above. A cow in good condition has ample body reserves to help her through the PPI when her nutrient needs are the highest due to lactation.

Assessing your cows BCS 60 to 80 days prior to calving is recommended as it provides ample time to increase their condition if need be, or at least maintain it. Obviously depending on when your herd calves this period may have passed but if not and you find them in a BCS < 5 you will want to increase their caloric intake. The amount will depend on their current BCS, the desired BCS, and the number of days prior to calving. If the cows

are in a BCS 5 at this time it would be advisable to assess what their energy intake is and be aware of how it will increase leading up to calving so that it can be increased as needed to maintain them at this level.

Body Condition Scoring system for beef cattle

- 1 Emaciated:** Clearly defined bone structure of shoulder, ribs, back, hooks and pins easily visible. Little muscle tissue or fat present.
- 2 Very thin:** Small amount of muscling in the hindquarters. Fat present, but not abundant. Space between spinous process easily seen.
- 3 Thin:** Fat begins to cover loin, back, and fore ribs. Upper skeletal structures visible. Spinous processes are easily identified.
- 4 Borderline:** Fore ribs less noticeable. The transverse spinous process can be identified with slight pressure. Fat and muscle tissue not abundant, but increasing in fullness.
- 5 Moderate:** Ribs are visible only when the animal has been shrunk. Processes not visible. Each side of the tail head is filled, but not mounded.
- 6 Good:** Ribs are not noticeable to the eye. Muscling in hindquarters plump and full. Fat around tail head and covering the fore ribs.
- 7 Very good:** Spinous process can only be felt with firm pressure. Fat cover in abundance on both side of tail head.
- 8 Fat:** Animal smooth and block appearance; bone structure difficult to identify. Fat cover is abundant.
- 9 Obese:** Structure difficult to identify and fat cover excessive. Mobility may be impaired.

If your cows are currently calving and they are in a BCS of 5 or less improving their condition can

be difficult as most of the consumed energy after meeting maintenance needs goes for milk production and not fat deposition.

A study at the Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory near Miles City, Montana looked at the effect of BCS at time of calving and two levels of Net Energy maintenance (NEm) in the diet of beef cows post calving on the length of their PPI. It was found that besides having a shorter PPI if they were in good condition compared to thin the amount of NEm in their diet post calving also affected length of the PPI. The cows in good body condition at time of calving and received 21 Mcal/day of NEm post calving had a shorter PPI by 7-10 days compared to those that received 18 Mcal/day. However, those in thin condition at time of calving fed the higher NEm diet had a 7-10 day longer PPI compared to those fed the lower NEm diet.

It was not known why the cows in thin condition at time of calving and fed the higher energy diet had a longer PPI compared to those fed the lower energy diet but it was speculated that the additional grain in the high energy ration may have stimulated milk production instead of going for body conditioning. Thus, trying to improve cow condition following calving may not be feasible but furnishing them at least the amounts of NEm and protein they require should at least help maintain their current condition.

With the above said; *Is there an optimal BCS for the cows to be in at time of calving?* The general rule is at least a BCS of 5, but if the goal is to maximize profit it could be lower. What will determine the optimal BCS are time of calving in relation to the availability of green grass and the cost of supplemental or substitute feeds.

Lush, green grass stimulates reproduction better than most any other source of feed. Thus, if the cows have access to new green forage prior to initiation of breeding they could be in a lower BCS at time of calving then otherwise and have profitable conception rates. For NE Wyoming this means that cows that begin calving in late April

might have satisfactory conception rates when in a BCS 4 at calving, but if calving began in late March their BCS might need to be at least a 5 for conception rates to be at a profitable level.

Cost of providing supplemental energy and protein will also influence what the optimal BCS the cows can be in at time of calving to have profitable conception rates. Having the cows in a BCS 4 at time of calving could result in more profit than if they were in a 5 or better due to the cost of feed. Although there would be fewer calves to sell the resultant loss in income may be less than what it would have cost to feed the cows so that they were in a higher BCS at calving.



However with the above said, there is evidence that cows in a BCS less than 5 at time of calving have weaker calves that are more susceptible to disease. This is due to thin cows producing lower volumes of colostrum resulting in the calves having lower serum immunoglobulin levels. So a BCS of at least 5 at time of calving may still be the best target to shoot for.

What it boils down to is knowing the BCS of your cows at key times throughout the year: 1) 60-80 days prior to calving; 2) at calving; 3) at breeding; and 4) at weaning/pregnancy check. This will allow you to not only make timely adjustments in your feeding program so your cows are at the optimal BCS at calving, but also help you determine what that optimal BCS is.



Winter Watering

Winters in Wyoming can be difficult and are almost always windy. Temperature extremes and constant winds often remove what little moisture remains in the soil from the previous growing season and any snow that may have fallen.

Dry soils can seriously damage root systems of herbaceous perennial plants as well as woody shrubs and trees. The reason is dry soils change temperature very quickly. They also heave, expand, and contract with changes in temperature. The resulting soil movement can physically damage or destroy roots.

Moist soils, on the other hand, change temperature much more slowly, which is one of the basic properties of water. Consequently, soils kept moist during the winter are less susceptible to temperature changes and do not expand and contract like dry soils do. Keeping soil moist tends to save root systems from being damaged.

Evergreens are most susceptible to winter drying since they do not lose foliage during these months. In lawns, grass roots may die, leading to large areas of dead turf. Any plant stressed from winter desiccation is more likely to succumb to disease and insect problems the following growing season.

Spring bulbs may not bloom properly. Lack of water for bulbs can lead to brown or deformed flowers or flowers that don't open at all. Perennial herbaceous plants may show root loss, and crown buds may die due to inadequate winter watering.

If perennial plants, especially new ones, are not watered during the winter, symptoms of winter desiccation may appear during the next growing season. Symptoms usually include branch die-back and leaf burn or even total plant loss.

Mulching and watering during the winter months can help. Mulch tends to insulate the ground and keep the soil at relatively constant temperatures. Watering fills open spaces and can help seal cracks in the soil and minimize root damage caused by temperature swings.

During the winter, when there is no snow cover, when temperatures are above 40 degrees Fahrenheit, when the ground is not frozen, and when the wind is not blowing, homeowners are encouraged to get out their hoses. Water enough to moisten the soil at least 6 to 8 inches down. Remember to drain and store hoses again to prevent ice damage to the hose or water taps.



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Northeast Extension Connection

***A quarterly report from Campbell, Crook, Johnson, Sheridan
and Weston County Extension***

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