



Pueblo County Extension Agriculture Tribune



The Quarterly Pueblo County Extension Ag Newsletter



CROCKPOT CHICKEN TACOS

INGREDIENTS

- 4 BONELESS SKINLESS CHICKEN BREAST HALVES
- 1 C. SALSA
- 1 C. CANNED DICED TOMATOES WITH CHILIES OR 1 10OZ. CAN ROTEL
- 1 PACKAGE TACO SEASONING
- 1/2 DICED ONION
- TACO SHELLS OF YOUR CHOICE
- YOUR FAVORITE TOPPINGS, I.E. LETTUCE, TOMATOES, CHEESE, AVOCADO, CILANTRO

INSTRUCTIONS

1. COMBINE SALSA, CANNED TOMATOES, AND TACO SEASONING.
2. PLACE ONIONS AND CHICKEN IN THE SLOW COOKER AND TOP WITH TOMATO MIXTURE.
3. COOK ON LOW 7-8 HOURS OR HIGH 3-4 HOURS.
4. REMOVE CHICKEN FROM SLOW COOKER AND SHRED. RETURN TO SLOW COOKER AND STIR IN JUICES.
5. SERVE IN TACO SHELLS AND ADD YOUR FAVORITE TOPPINGS

RECIPE ADAPTED FROM: SPENDWITHPENNIES.COM
[HTTPS://WWW.SPENDWITHPENNIES.COM/CROCKPOT-CHICKEN-TACOS/](https://www.spendwithpennies.com/crockpot-chicken-tacos/)



Meet the Ag Team!

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highlighted
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partners!





Pests Don't Stand a Chance.... or Maybe They Do

By: Kristi Bartolo, Agronomy Specialist, Pueblo County



One of the largest natural threats to agriculture worldwide are “pests”, who are consistently present and living in the environment. These pests range from mammals to insects to fungi and are considered a menace when they cause some sort of destruction, disturbance or annoyance to crops and livestock. Some of the world’s greatest tragedies have been caused by pests, like the bubonic plague, spread by fleas on rats or the great potato famine in the 1800’s in Ireland caused by fungal infections on the plants (Penn State Extension). Humans have reciprocally been battling these various pests since ancient times. Many indigenous peoples throughout the world, worked to manage pests by either planting enough to feed both the community and the pest and some by utilizing natural enemies of the pests (plant toxins or natural insect predators) (Penn State Extension). With the advent and production of synthetic chemicals in the 1930’s and 40’s, pests were slated for complete eradication due to the ease and effectiveness of the chemicals to kill the pests. Since then, pesticides have become a major force in society, causing turbulence but also aiding agricultural producers.

With a better understanding of what pesticides can do, how they help production and how they can hinder the environment, farmers and ranchers have been implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) which utilizes many tools to manage populations of agricultural pests, instead of working to completely eradicate them. IPM plans incorporate natural enemies of pests, scouting for pests and the use of plants like cover crops, to manage the unwanted plants in conjunction with the use of pesticides.

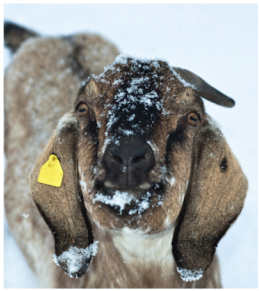
It is also important to consider the safety of the person applying the pesticide. Federal regulations have developed protections for pesticide applicators under the Worker Protection Standard. This standard aims to educate all people on the potential hazards of pesticide chemicals and provides information on proper handling and management of pesticides. All EPA registered pesticides have extensive labels with pertinent information, helping applicators more efficiently and safely apply pesticides. Labels detail the type of pesticide (chemical compound), how and when to apply it and the environmental hazards among other relevant information. It is very important to read the label before using any pesticide – the label is the law.

No matter the operation, agricultural producers will always be resisting pests but with a full tool kit, including the use of pesticides, they are better armed to be more productive and sustainable for generations to come.



Winterizing for your Livestock Animals

By: Beth Hayes, Ag & Natural Resources Coordinator



We have been skirting by the majority of the winter storms for the tail end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024 but some weather forecasts are predicting our winter patterns are about to change due to the switch from La Nina to El Nino. With this in mind it's a good idea to make sure all your livestock species are prepped for the cold and wind. An insulated animal can handle the majority of the cold temperatures we see here in Pueblo but they struggle to maintain their core body heat if they get wet, cold and it's windy. That spells disaster for just about everything.

With that in mind, you'll want to ensure all animals have the following items accessible to them as needed depending on herd/flock size, current living arrangements, animal weight and health status along with age. These are general guidelines that apply to most livestock species but as always you know your animals best. Some breeds will be just fine with minimal winter assistance and others will need more aid. Dial in what works best for your operation to ensure a successful winter for all.

1.) Fresh unfrozen water

Water is a directly linked to food consumption during the winter. These needs can't be met by eating snow. Having frozen, inaccessible matter limits how much dry matter intake which creates a stress factor on an animal generating a core body temperature. Excessively cold water temperature will also decrease water intake which creates a similar stress issue. Keeping unfrozen water is key to healthy winterized animals of all types.

2.) Steady food intake

Food consumption generates heat in all animals. This is why before large storms set in you will see ranchers of all sized operations lay down extra feed for their animals. This is seen in beef cattle out on the range who adapt to colder temperatures by increasing their metabolic rate that includes their heart rate, respiration and blood flow. Animals need more feed to meet maintenance requirements in the winter. This also applies to small hoof stock such as goats, sheep, poultry and rabbits.

3.) Access to shelter or a wind break

Chilly wind can steal heat extremely fast from an animal. This is commonly done using a barn or other man-made structures. Natural wind breaks can be from trees, large rock outcrops and land windbreaks. These general guidelines will help you adjust for any storms that come our way this year. Keep in mind the animals' body condition score, age, general health status, and access to the items listed above when making proper management calls. We wish you and your animals a safe and successful wintery season.



The El Niño Effect

By: Kristi Bartolo, Agronomy Specialist, Pueblo County

This less commonly observed weather pattern always brings anticipation of a white (snow covered) winter in the northern hemisphere. Though this can be true, El Niño weather is quite variable and effects each part of the U.S. differently. The El Niño stems from a slight warming of ocean surface and atmospheric temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean region which lead to different weather patterns across the globe.



The El Niño that developed in late summer of 2023 has continued to build and is predicted to persist through April of 2024 according to the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center (NWS & CPC). The NWS has provided a 3-month outlook showing Colorado having a 30 to 40% chance of more precipitation through the winter and early spring. This chance of moisture can positively impact agriculture across the state, holding back severe drought conditions and improving snowpack in the mountains which will hopefully lead to completely fulfilled water rights for irrigation. In December 2023, Pueblo County received 1.31 inches of precipitation which is significantly more than average. There is still limited snowpack in the Arkansas River Basin (68% of the median) but with the strong El Niño still controlling the weather, hopefully the coming months will gain more snowfall.



Some parts of the northern U.S. are predicted not to fare as well due the El Niño, with drier and warmer outlooks through the winter and the southeastern U.S. may be facing extreme flooding evens with much higher-than-normal precipitation predicted to occur in the area. With a changing climate and the El Niño, another season of wild weather is sure to captivate the farmers and ranchers of Colorado as they navigate through decision making and management for their farms and ranches.

SPRING RANGE TIPS

BY: BETH HAYES, AG & NATURAL RESOURCES COORDINATOR

As the new year starts to kick off and we look forward to the upcoming spring months, it's a good idea to start planning your management strategies now. Using the items below as guideline can help set you up for success. Not every item listed below will apply to every operation but they allow for a broad view of how your range is doing and what you can do to improve the quality of the plants that will arrive and green up in just a few short months. Unsure what other steps you should think about taking? Give us a call at 719-583-6566 and we'd be happy to help.



Spring Check-Off's

1. Test your soil

Without a solid foundation of soil your rangeland will suffer. Testing the soil in a grazed area or an area you wish to improve can show you exactly what is missing. Soil testing can determine soil pH and appropriate fertilizer requirements. It can also give you a view into the soil type which plays a factor into water availability for plant life. CSU Extension does offer soil testing services to help with the questions you need answered.



2. Check fences

After a windy winter like we normally have here in Pueblo, fences may wind up damaged. It is wise to check your exterior and interior range fences prior to the release of livestock animals to ensure they are ready for use. The ground is the softest and easiest to work in the spring so it's great time to change, improve or add fence to your pasture settings.



3. Weed Control

Understanding what is growing in your rangeland is critical to functionality. Getting started in springtime is key for weed suppression through a variety of methods depending on what type of weed you are battling. The Pueblo CSU Extension office has a county specific weed booklet that is free to the community that lists resources for management options for each major species. Give us a call today for a free emailed or hard copy version.



4. Grazing Plan

Limiting overgrazing on premature spring grasses is important for both the animals and the rangeland forage. Shortening the grazing period will allow the animals to get enough forage while not stunting grass growth. Young forage is high in water content and low in nutrients and fiber which can lead to a variety of health problems such as grass tetany. Plan ahead to make sure your plants and livestock will thrive this coming year.



Upcoming Events

January Dates

- Jan. 19, 2024
 - C.A.R.T. Team Volunteer Orientation
- Jan. 23, 2024
 - Pueblo County Water Updates Class
- Jan. 27, 2024
 - C.A.R.T. Team Review Meeting

February Dates

- Feb. 3, 2024
 - Pueblo County Stockman’s Annual Mtg
- Feb. 23 & 24, 2024
 - Sun Soil Water Ag Summit
- Feb. 24 & 25, 2024
 - Pueblo County Bee Curious Bee School
- Feb. 27 & 28, 2024
 - CFVGA Annual Conference

March Dates

- Mar. 6 & 7, 2024
 - Arkansas River Basin Water Forum
- Mar. 8, 2024
 - Central CO Foodshed Gathering
- Mar. 16, 2024
 - Small Acreage Insect Management Class

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