Pasture Burning and Tick Control

Smoke fills the air this week, as many producers across Greenwood County have begun the annual spring burning of our native pasture. Burning pastures in the Flint Hills can significantly reduce tick populations, with burning early in the spring while ticks are still overwintering being the most effective (Salazar et al., 2024). The impact of burning is immediate, with reduced tick numbers lasting the growing season after the burn.

Female ticks lay thousands of eggs and tick populations can rebound very quickly if burning isn't maintained. When burning, pay special attention to thickets and areas of dense plant growth. Eastern redcedars are a tick hot spot (Noden et al., 2021).

Alarmingly, not only are more ticks found in these areas, but they are also carrying more pathogens than those collected from surrounding pasture (Noden et al., 2021). Keep grass around buildings short and bushes trimmed and off the ground.

For on animal tick control, fly tags can help control ear associated ticks like Gulf Coast and spinose ear ticks. These are not effective for tick species that are on the body of the animal, like the American dog tick, which transmits Anaplasmosis. Sprays can be effective if they reach areas where ticks are attached, and tick populations are not resistant.

As seen with flies, rates of pesticide resistance in ticks are also increasing. Common tick attachment sites include areas under the tail, in folds of skin, under the belly/udder areas and dewlap. Pour-on's can also be effective but be aware that those containing macrocyclic lactone group chemicals will impact your dung beetle populations.

Good luck with your spring burning!