

Wednesday Field Day near Dawson to Focus on Switchgrass

(KTNC)--Switchgrass is a hardy, warm season perennial grass that's been well known for its use as a forage crop. Plant breeders have now developed a switchgrass variety named "Liberty" that has proven to be a high yielding biomass crop.

The University of Nebraska is part of a multi-state USDA-sponsored research project focusing on the use of perennial bio-energy crops in the Midwest. Nemaha County Extension Educator Gary Lesoing says people can learn more about the Liberty switchgrass at a field day near Dawson on Wednesday.

UNL Extension experts will be on hand to discuss various aspects of switchgrass production, genetics and management of the crop, and using it as a bio-energy feedstock. There will also be discussion of some potential pest and disease problems, as well as some environmental benefits.

Lesoing says the switchgrass may help with erosion control and provide habitat for wildlife, such as pheasants.

The switchgrass was first planted during the drought in 2012 and Lesoing says they've gotten a good stand of the crop. He says it's also shown good survivability over the winter.

Wednesday's field day near Dawson will be at a field on the Ben Steffen Farm, west of Highway 75. Registration that day begins at 8:45 a.m. and the event runs from 9:15 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

There is no charge to attend, and registration includes lunch, refreshments, and field day materials.

To pre-register for the event, call the University of Nebraska Extension at 402-624-8030.

Field site maps are available online at: <http://ardc.unl.edu/bioenergyfeedstockfieldday>.

The site near Dawson is one of two locations in Nebraska that's part of the research project. The other field is near Beaver Crossing.

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