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Effects of Home Value, Home Age, and Lot Size on Lawn Watering Practices of Residential Homeowners

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Summary. Lawn care and lawn watering practices of residential homeowners were significantly affected by home value and home age, but lot size was less a factor.

Rationale. Urbanization is increasing the land area covered with turfgrasses, which may affect water quantity and quality. Inaccurate perceptions about water requirements for turfgrass, or embellished expectations about lawn appearance (e.g., maintaining perfectly green lawns, even during drought) may result in over-irrigation. Residential home dwellers may need to reduce irrigation inputs to conserve water and improve water quality.

Objectives. Determine how home value, home age, and lot size affect the perceptions, knowledge, and behaviors of residential homeowners in Olathe and Wichita, Kansas, regarding irrigation and lawn care during summer months.

Study Description. A survey (Figure 1) was mailed to 9,992 homeowners in Olathe and 15,534 homeowners in Wichita, with a return rate of 12%. Home values were grouped as: <$150,000; $150,000 to $200,000; $200,000 to $250,000; and >$250,000. Home ages were grouped as: 1) >30 years old; 2) 15 to 30 years old; and 3) <15 years old. Lot sizes were grouped as: 1) <9,000 ft²; 2) 9,000 to 14,000 ft² and 3) >14,000 ft². Lot size did not equate strictly to lawn size, but also included the home, garage, impervious surfaces, etc.

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Results. Owners of more expensive and/or newer homes were more likely to: water frequently, water on a routine schedule, feel it was important to have a green lawn all the time, have an in-ground sprinkler system, and sweep or blow grass clippings and lawn care products off impervious surfaces. Owners of less expensive and/or older homes were more likely to: never water or water infrequently, water based on the lawn’s appearance rather than on a routine schedule, consider it less important to have a green lawn, not have an in-ground sprinkler system, and leave grass clippings and lawn care products on impervious surfaces rather than blowing them off. A small percentage of homeowners who swept or blew clippings and/or lawn-care products did so into streets/storm drains. Owners of less expensive and/or older homes were somewhat more likely to engage in this practice.

Recommendation. Educational efforts to improve lawn water conservation should be concentrated on homeowners in more expensive and/or newer homes because they water more frequently and routinely. Efforts to protect surface water quality should include homeowners of less expensive and/or older homes.
Figure 1. This survey was developed to determine how residential homeowners make decisions about lawn care and watering during the summer months.