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## Forage News [2017-09]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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# Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock producers in Kentucky informed

Dr. S. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, MS.~ Editors

September 2017

## **Register Now for the Kentucky Grazing Conference: Pasture Management to Control Weeds and Improve Production**

The 2017 Kentucky Grazing Conference will focus on pasture management to control weeds and improve pasture production and will be held: October 17th in Lexington and October 18th in Hopkinsville. The Keynote speaker is Kathy Voth, who has presented nationally on using grazing to control weeds and is a founding partner and editor of the popular online newsletter "On Pasture."

Other speakers will discuss management and chemical options to control weeds including: Dr. Chris Teutsch, UK; Dr. Scott Flynn, DOW; Dr. Greg Brann, NRCS; Dr. Michael Flessner, VT; and Bill Payne, retired dairyman. The popular KFGC Forage Spokesperson contest will be held at the Lexington location. Early registration is \$40 and ends October 4 or you may choose the value option of conference registration plus a one year KFGC membership for \$50. KY Forage and Grassland Council membership is normally \$25. Early registration ends October 4th. Go to the UK forage website and click on "Grazing Conference Tab" to register ([www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage)) or for full program. Exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities are also available.

## **Mid-October is Ideal Time to Plant Small Grains**

A group of UK specialists were recently discussing what is the best small grain for high quality forage. The consensus was wheat, since it is widely available and favored by many KY growers for forage. For dairy or other high producing livestock, you need to harvest at the boot stage (or sooner) to maintain high quality. At this stage protein content and digestibility are high – similar to alfalfa haylage or corn silage. When harvesting at this early stage, the field can be double-cropped with corn or full season soybeans. It is very difficult to cure early season small grain forages for hay, so most producers preserve as silage or baleage.

Beef producers growing wheat for forage often graze the crop late winter (early March) and then harvest later in the reproductive growth stage (at the milk to soft-dough stage). At this later stage, yields are much higher, but the forage is said to be nutritionally equivalent to an average hay crop. When grazing wheat or any small grains, make sure to remove cattle once stems begin to elongate if you plan to harvest the regrowth.

Forage yields between wheat varieties vary by over one ton per acre so refer to Table 4 of the 2017 Kentucky Small Grain Variety Performance Test. Ideally, choose a variety that performs well over several years. For example, the 3 year average shows Pioneer26R10 with consistently high forage yields and also high grain yields. Other varieties that have done well over the past 3 years are: Beck 125; Agrimax 438 DynaGro 9223, DynaGro 9522; Agrimax 454 and VaTech Hilliard. Newer high yielding varieties with only 2 years of test data include: Seed Consultants 13S26, Croplan SRW 9415 and USG 3197.

Nick Roy, Adair County Extension Agent, shared his experiences with local farmers. "I see very few dairy farmers planting cereal rye anymore, unless they are just using it for grazing or cover crop. Rye has a very small harvest window for high quality. The most planted crop for us (Adair County) is still wheat. Cosaque black oats and annual ryegrass are gaining in popularity. There are now later maturing triticale varieties available, but they seem to have the same quality problems as older varieties, just a few weeks later in the season. A lot of my farmers who have planted barley have had trouble with Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus. I seldom see winter oats planted in Adair county because they are not very winter hardy .

Overall, my "go to" recommendation is still wheat. A certified wheat selected from our forage trials would be ideal, but many farmers still plant bin run seed. (Note: it is illegal to save seed of some propriety wheat varieties). If they want higher quality I recommend annual ryegrass."

## **Grazing Corn: Valuable Forage for Daviess County Producer**

Over fifty producers and agri-business professionals attended the 2017 KFGC Field Day. Clint Hardy, the Daviess County Extension agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources facilitated the late afternoon event at Tim Taylor's farm. Grazing corn and other summer annuals was the focus of the evening.

Educational presentations by Kenny Burdine (UK Ag Economics Specialist), Ray Smith, and Chris Teutsch (UK Forage Specialists) helped producers understand the economics, management and other benefits of grazing these annual crops. Kenny Burdine summarized these topics by saying, "Don't focus on the up-front costs,

focus on future profits. Utilization of what you grow is the key to profitability.”

The highlight of the evening was Tim Taylor leading a discussion on how he uses corn in his grazing operation and in his pasture improvement plan. Tim raises calves

on high quality pastures (corn, endophyte-free tall fescue/clover/lespedeza) for CPH sales and for freezer beef. He plants improved forages on the corn ground and rotates the corn to another section of his farm each year. When asked what people say about him grazing corn, Tim laughed and told the group, “People come up to the house all the time and tell me my cows are in the corn!” Refer to UK publication ID-152 “Grazing Corn” for more details. ~ Dr. Jimmy Henning



Daviess County farmer Tim Taylor explains how he uses corn for his grazing operation at the recent field day. Over fifty farmers learned how Taylor uses corn in his stocker/freezer beef operation and as a rotation crop to high quality endophyte-free tall fescue, red clover, annual lespedeza pastures.

### Weeds or Wonders?

We often think of pastures as monocultures or simple mixtures of improved cool-season grasses and legumes. In reality, mature pastures are complex mixtures of many different species including “weedy” grasses and forbs (non-leguminous broadleaves). So what makes a plant a weed? Many people consider a plant a weed if it is growing where it was not planted. For example, a corn plant is a weed if you find it in a soybean field. For pastures, I like to define a weed as a plant that you cannot get a cow to eat.

We often think of weeds as lowering the nutritive value of pastures, but grazed at the correct growth stage,

**Table 1. Nutritive value of common pasture weeds at the vegetative stage compared to alfalfa.**

Plant Species	IVDMD (%)	ADF (%)	CP (%)
Alfalfa	72	24	27
Redroot pigweed	73	21	25
Common ragweed	73	25	25
Giant foxtail	62	33	18
Barnyardgrass	70	33	18

Adapted from the nutritive value of common pasture weeds and their relation to livestock nutrient requirements, VVCE Pub. 418-150, Blacksburg, VA

some weeds can be relatively high in nutritive value (Table 1). For example, in the vegetative growth stage, pigweed is 73% digestible with a crude protein concentration of more than 20%! So are weeds really the unsung heroes of pastures? I

see blue.

am not sure that I would go that far, but having a few weedy grasses or forbs is not the end of the world and may in some cases even be beneficial.

A great example of a beneficial weed is crabgrass. When I worked at Virginia Tech, I used to say that if it wasn't for crabgrass and wiregrass (bermudagrass) we would have a lot of hungry cows in Southside VA. Crabgrass is a summer annual grass that is commonly found in closely grazed cool-season pastures during the summer months. Although it is an annual, it acts like a perennial through prolific reseeding. This grass is both highly digestible and palatable. Recent work in Georgia showed that adding crabgrass to pearl millet increased average daily gain by approximately one-third of pound per day.

It is very important to recognize that some weeds are simply NOT palatable and may even be toxic. Examples of toxic weeds that can be found in pastures include perilla mint, jimsonweed, and poison hemlock. Normally, animals will avoid grazing toxic plants unless forage availability is very low. In cases where toxic or unpalatable weeds are present at high levels in pastures, an application of the proper herbicide at correct the time of the year for the targeted weed species is likely warranted. However, it is important to recognize that herbicides that are really good at killing broadleaf weeds, will also kill or injure desirable forbs and clover.

Next time you are out in your pasture take a few minutes and watch what your cows are grazing. They will let you know what they consider is a weed and what is a forage! ~Dr. Chris Teutsch

### Successful Establishment of Novel Tall Fescues

Recently, John Thomas hosted a Novel Tall Fescue Field Day to showcase the successful establishment of novel tall fescue on his beef cattle farm in Madison County. Twenty acres were killed using a double application of glyphosate and Texoma MaxQ II tall fescue was drilled in last fall. Today, the field is clean, productive and safe for cattle. Company representatives and extension personnel participated through the farm to look at the newly seeded field and discuss how to establish novel fescue on other farms. Additional pictures can be found at [www.kyforagenews.com](http://www.kyforagenews.com).



### Upcoming Events

List of upcoming events at [www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage)  
 SEPT 27-28 KY 2-Day Grazing School, Versailles, KY  
 OCT 17 KY Grazing Conf. Lexington, KY  
 OCT 18 –KY Grazing Conf., Hopkinsville, KY  
 JAN 14-17 - 2018 AFGC Annual Meetings, Louisville, KY  
 FEB 22, 2018 - KY Alfalfa and Stored Forages Conf., Cave City, KY

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