



12-1-2016

Forage News [2016-12]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, "Forage News [2016-12]" (2016). *Forage News*. 15.
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Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock producers in Kentucky informed

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

December 2016

Bale Grazing Can Spread Nutrients

Winter feeding hay is a necessity on many beef cattle farms. During the winter, feeding hay in a sacrifice lot can reduce the negative impact on soil structure and plant persistency to a defined area. However, the use of a sacrifice lot also concentrates nutrient deposition from wasted hay, urine and feces in these areas that often have no forage that can benefit from these nutrients the following growing season.

Bale grazing allows for a more uniform distribution of these nutrients on pasture areas. The process involves placing hay bales in a field in an organized fashion. Temporary fencing is used to provide access to a row of hay bales while preventing contact to the other bales until they are fed. Using hay rings is not required, but using rings will minimize the amount of hay loss. This systematic feeding of hay placed within a large area of the field distributes the nutrients from hay waste and animal excrement more uniformly. This method of feeding will improve subsequent pasture and hay production through increased nutrient recycling and lower the purchased fertilizer needs.

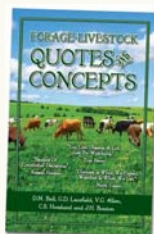
The use of bale grazing is more suitable in climates that are very cold allowing for the ground to freeze or the western U.S. where less winter precipitation reduces soil compaction and muddy conditions. Currently though, we have a few operations implementing this practice within Kentucky. You can learn more about one producer's experience by watching the following video <https://youtu.be/IAzktSf4N8>

~ Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler

Quote of the Month:

***Before Anything Else, Preparation is the Key to Success* ~Alexander Graham Bell**

Someone once described learning how to fly as learning how to be out in front of the airplane. It is too late to worry about where you are right now—you are already moving forward to somewhere else. Success in management of forage-livestock systems is the same. You must anticipate what is coming in the future and be prepared to take the appropriate actions. If you are only looking at what is happening today, you are headed for a crash. To purchase the Forage-Livestock Quotes and Concepts book, contact KFGC at ukforageextension@uky.edu. Books are \$5 each.



Novel Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop to be held in Lexington March 9th

The University of Kentucky and KFGC has partnered with the Alliance for Grassland Renewal to host a one day Novel Tall fescue Renovation Workshop on March 9th. The event, a duplicate of successful events in Missouri, will provide producers with the tools and information to renovate toxic pastures and manage new stands of novel tall fescues. Speakers include local producers, company representatives and researchers from across the country. Classroom sessions will be held at the UK Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and hands-on activities will be conducted at the UK Spindletop Research Farm, both in Lexington. Early bird registration (\$60) includes refreshments, lunch and educational materials. More information and Registration can be found at www.kyfescue.eventbrite.com.

Financial Assistance for Establishing Novel Endophyte Tall Fescue on Pastures

Producers seeking financial assistance to improve their pastures with novel endophyte tall fescue should contact their local USDA-NRCS office to make an appointment. The local conservation planner will visit their farm to help determine objectives and develop a conservation plan. The conservation plan will address resource concerns such as re-seeding pastures to improve forage quality. There are program eligibility criteria that must be met by all applicants and NRCS and FSA will guide them through the required eligibility paperwork.

NRCS will rank the applications according to local resource concerns and notify individuals if funding is approved. NRCS staff will assist in developing a contract and associated technical documents to guide in the establishment of novel endophyte tall fescue in pastures. Contact your local NRCS office for more information. Your local office can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ky/contact/>.
~ Adam Jones, USDA-NRCS Grazing Specialist

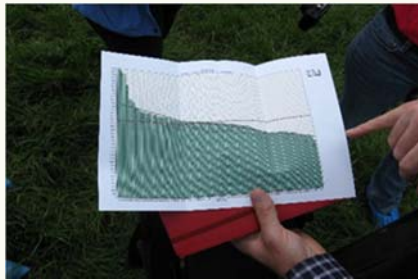
Heart of America Grazing Conference Coming Up!

The Illinois Forage and Grassland Council is hosting the 2017 Heart of America Grazing Conference January 18 and 19th in Quincy, IL. Details can be found at www.uky.edu/ag/forage or register online at www.illinoisbeef.com.

AFGC Tour of New Zealand 2016

In the spring of 2016, I discovered that Dr. Dennis Hancock, Extension Forage Agronomist at the Univ. of Georgia, would be leading a tour of New Zealand. This tour was sponsored by the American Forage and Grassland Council. I signed up immediately since this had been on my "bucket list" for about fifteen years. Below is an excerpt from Bill's journal:

October 24: Our tour bus took us to the Waikato region and the dairy farm of Neil and Eileen Bateup. They milk 700 Jersey cows once a day in a 40 stall rotary parlor. Their shift to once a day milking was prompted by their desire to lose fewer of his young cows to reproductive failure. Their production of 800 kg total solids/hectare is not among the highest rank in their region but their net profit/ha is. We encountered no NZ dairymen who could not quote their cost of production. They also intensively manage their forages which on this farm made up the total ration. They sample each pasture for quantity of dry matter on a weekly basis with a rising plate meter. The output is known as a grazing wedge (right).



A full account of the trip can be found at : www.kyforagenews.com

Featured Publication: Using Dry Lots to Conserve Pastures and Reduce Pollution Potential (ID-171)

Managing livestock can also be challenging, especially during the winter. Improper pasture management during the winter and early spring months can adversely affect pasture quality and the environment. Livestock owners can elect to use a dry lot during periods of increased rain or drought, when pastures need to be protected. Dry lots are designed as permanent heavy traffic use areas and are often used on cattle farms. They keep animals in a confined area to prevent them from damaging the entire pasture. A typical dry lot would contain water sources, feeders, and mineral feeders. The area can be used for wintering animals, handling animals for medical treatments, etc. Using filter fabric and gravel creates a long lasting and economical dry lot. See Forage Website for full article.

Dallisgrass Makes Rare Impact on KY Horse Farm

Recently, one batch of grass hay was suspected of causing neurological symptoms in a horse in southeastern KY (on the border with TN). The horse was reportedly staggering and displaying a wide stance, muscle trembling and difficulty balancing. Symptoms of the animal improved after the hay was no longer fed to the animal; a similar series of events followed when another animal was fed the same hay.

The "staggers" syndrome occurs when any animal grazes or consumes hay

with dallisgrass seedheads that are infected with an endophytic fungus (*Claviceps paspali*). Fungal spores overwinter on the ground, becoming airborne in the spring. Where unaffected seeds are light brown to tan, the spores grow sclerotia which replace the seed and turn dark brown to black. The potential for toxicity is unchanged with drying or storage, but dallisgrass hay can be less risk than pasture because some seed shatter during hay making.

Dallisgrass (a warm season grass) is not common in Kentucky, but is slowly encroaching into the area with recent warmer summers. Pastures containing dallisgrass should be kept mowed to remove seedheads, therefore removing the risk of *Claviceps paspali* infections. Hay harvested from pastures containing dallisgrass should be carefully inspected for signs of infection and not fed if sclerotia bodies are found. Dr. Ray Smith believes this to be an isolated event in Kentucky and not a widespread challenge to the area. Horse and cattle owners should be vigilant to check hay and pastures regularly for the presence of dallisgrass. Since there are numerous causes of tremors and neurological abnormalities in horses, owners should contact their veterinarian immediately if they notice any animals showing neurological signs. ~ Dr. Megan Romano and Krista Lea.



Infected Dallisgrass seedheads are often swollen and rusty or black in color Photo credit: Stacy

Small Ruminant Grazing Conference

The annual Kentucky Small Ruminant Grazing Conference will be held February 18th in Elizabethtown, KY. Topics include KDA Market Update, Establishing Small Ruminant Pasture, Parasite Control, Rotational Grazing, Economics of Small Ruminants, a producer panel and FAMACHA optional Training. Registration is \$30 and closes January 25th. Visit rcars.ca.uky.edu/small-ruminant-grazing-conference for more info and to register.

Upcoming Events

See a full list and details at www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage
DEC 1 KY Farm Bureau Forage Session, Louisville, KY
JAN 18-19 Heart of America Grazing Conf., Quincy, IL
JAN 20 Forages at KCA, Lexington, KY
JAN 22-24 AFGC Annual Meeting, Roanoke, VA
JAN 30 Pastures Please!! Horse Conf., Lexington, KY
FEB 18 Small Ruminant Conf., Elizabethtown, KY
FEB 21 KY Alfalfa & Stored Forages Conf., Cave City, KY
MAR 9 Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop, Lexington, KY

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