

GETTING MORE FROM YOUR ALFALFA

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Today marks the 32nd consecutive year we have come together to discuss alfalfa and its role on your farm, in Kentucky, and our nation. Over these 32 years we have discussed many topics and seen many advances, unfortunately we aren't making progress relative to acres, yield and quality that I would like to see. Maybe I am getting impatient as I am actually thinking about retirement. Now wait, you are one step ahead of me. I know you are thinking he has shown many graphs, tables and charts over the years showing how we have improved and yes, I know he realizes what a challenge we as producers have had over the last few years and yes, you are right, I do. So let's review.

In Kentucky our alfalfa acres bottomed out when the alfalfa weevil came in. We have slowly built back some of that loss. Yield and quality has certainly improved among the better producers like you but has made very little change as far as state average is concerned. At the time of this writing, I am still attempting to access just how much pasture and hay acres we lost last year as a result of high grain prices.

Enough of the "philosophying", later today I will introduce three of our alfalfa producers who will share their experiences. They are three excellent examples of producers who are "Getting more from their Alfalfa". As I reflect on their programs along with so many of you attending this conference, I believe you "get more from your alfalfa" because you pay more attention to details, do practices in a timely manner, evaluate inputs carefully, use research proven inputs, control the controllable and MARKET efficiently and enthusiastically.

Getting more from your alfalfa will require attention to the tried and true – the basics; soil, fertility, varieties, seeding technique (depth, rate, date and depth), pest management, harvest, storage and certainly marketing.

It is my hope that the discussions today along with a more cooperative Mother Nature will permit you to get more out of your alfalfa in 2012.