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FORAGE NEWS

For more forage information, visit our UK Forage Extension Website at: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage>

February 2013

Garry D. Lacefield and S. Ray Smith, Extension Forage Specialists • Christi Forsythe, Secretary

33RD KENTUCKY ALFALFA CONFERENCE

The 33rd Kentucky Alfalfa Conference will be February 21 at the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington. The program committee has put together a very timely-practical program including three top producers. The program will start at 8:00 with registration. Registration is \$15.00 (\$5.00 students) to be paid at the Conference (no advanced registration required). Registration fee includes admission to the conference and exhibit area, lunch, refreshments, proceedings and other related materials. In addition to excellent speakers, participants can visit with exhibitors and bid on silent auction items. The Alfalfa Awards will be presented during lunch.

The program begins at 8:45 with a welcome. Dr. Dennis Hancock, native Kentuckian and Extension Forage Specialist at the University of Georgia, will be the keynote speaker. Program and speakers include:

- 8:00 Registration, visit exhibits, silent auction
- 8:45 Welcome – Garry Lacefield
- 9:00 Alfalfa for Grazing – Garry Lacefield
- 9:20 Keys to Success When Harvesting Alfalfa as Baleage – Ray Smith
- 9:40 Our Experience with Roundup Ready Alfalfa – Clayton Gerald
- 10:10 Break, visit exhibits, silent auction
- 11:00 Fertilizer: How much is in each Bale? – Dennis Hancock
- 11:45 Discussion
- 12:00 Awards, Silent Auction Results
- 1:00 Making and Marketing Hay for the Horse Industry – Todd Clark
- 1:30 Finishing Beef on Alfalfa – Todd Powell
- 2:00 Blue Ribbon Panel – All Speakers
- 3:00 Adjourn

For more information and a map to the Conference, see the full program on our website <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/>. Do not hesitate to contact Christi (cforsyth@uky.edu 270-365-7541, Ext. 221) or me (glacefie@uky.edu 270-339-2273) if you have any questions.

HAY CONTEST ADDED AT ALFALFA CONFERENCE

A new addition at the 33rd Kentucky Alfalfa Conference February 21 is the "Hay Contest". Participants will have an opportunity to evaluate samples of hay and offer their best guess on its quality. Winners will receive a prize. One guess per person with winner announced during the Awards Program at lunch.

CHOOSE CLOVER VARIETIES CAREFULLY

My thanks to Mr. Gene Olson, U.K. Forage Variety Coordinator for getting all of the Forage Variety Tests summarized and available. The results are on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ForageVarietyTrials2.htm> and in hard copy at the Extension Offices. In the 2012 Red Clover trials Gene tested eleven varieties (plus experimentals) over three years at Quicksand, Owenton, Lexington and Princeton. There was no significant yield differences among the top 5 or 6 depending on test; HOWEVER, when you compare the highest to lowest, there was an average of 3.13 tons of dry matter per acre difference. Question: How much is 3.13 tons of hay worth? How much more per pound would you have to pay to get any variety in the top five?

KENTUCKY AND KENTUCKIANS WIN AT NATIONAL FORAGE CONFERENCE

The American Forage and Grassland Council's Annual Conference was held January 6-9 at the Marriott River Center in Covington, Kentucky. Kentucky's leadership and service to National Forage issues were obvious from the Opening when Drs. Jimmy Henning and Garry Lacefield were invited speakers. Dr. Ray Smith served as Program Chairman, President-elect and was recognized with the AFGC Medallion Award. Clayton Gerald was elected to the AFGC Board of Directors, Tom Keene, Bill Talley and Garry Lacefield serve on the Executive Committee of the Forage and Grassland Foundation. Jeremy McGill was elected to serve on the Foundation Board. Asbury College won the Forage Bowl, Bill Payne and Russell Hackley were keynote speakers at the Dow Forage Symposium and Crag Cohron (Butler County Producer) won the Forage Spokesman Contest. Several others presented posters and made presentations. The Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council received the AFGC Presidents Award.

HEART OF AMERICA GRAZING CONFERENCE

The 12th Heart of America Grazing Conference will "team-up" with the 29th Annual SW Missouri Spring Forage Conference for a combined meeting in Springfield, Missouri. The joint conference will be held at the University Plaza Hotel in Spring, MO beginning at 1:00 on February 25 and continuing through 3:30 on February 26. For details on the program, registration information and directions call: 417-831-5246, ext. 3 or visit their website at springforageconference.com.

FERTILIZER: HOW MUCH IS IN EACH BALE?

What do you see when you look at a bale? Certainly, many would say it is a source of feed for our livestock. Others see a commodity that is sold to their customers. These are the most important aspects of any forage. But, there is one other intrinsic value worth noting... its nutrient content. In a sense, it is a bale of fertilizer.

On most farms, fertilizer accounts for the single largest input into any hay or forage crop. It is a cost of doing business. Yes, fertilizer prices remain at very high levels. Unfortunately, there are no substitutes for providing adequate nutrients. There are no shortcuts. One can try, but it is likely that cutting back on fertilizer will cost more over the long-run because of decreased yields and poor stand longevity.

When fertilizer prices increased sharply in 2007-2009, many forage producers substantially cut phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) fertilization rates or left them out all together. By the end of 2009, perennial forage stands began to show the effect. Reports of poor yields and severe stand thinning became rampant. Fertilizer is still a bargain when compared to dragging down yield and the cost of renovating perennial forage stands.

The reason so much fertilizer is necessary is that hay and silage removes large quantities from the soil with each ton that is removed. With the run-up in fertilizer prices in the past 10 years, it is important to recognize how the fertilizer value of conserved forage has increased.

Certainly, the total value of the forage is mainly tied to its nutrient value (e.g., digestible energy, protein, etc.). Nonetheless, one should always understand that the minerals contained in that forage have value, too. Even forage (e.g., wheat straw) that has little or no nutritive value should never be sold or valued at less than its fertilizer value.

(SOURCE: Dr. Dennis Hancock, Forage Extension Specialist, University of Georgia)

Editor's Note: The above was excerpted from the proceedings of a paper to be presented by Dr. Dennis Hancock, Extension Forage Specialist, University of Georgia. For the "rest of the story" come to the 33rd Kentucky Alfalfa Conference on February 21 at the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington.

ALFALFA INCLUDED IN WISCONSIN CROP BUDGET COST CALCULATOR -

CHECK YOUR COST OF GROWING VARIOUS CROPS

The 2013 Crop Budget Cost of Production Calculator for Wisconsin is available online.

Producers can use it to construct enterprise budgets for corn after corn, corn after soybeans, corn silage after alfalfa, corn silage after corn, soybeans, winter wheat, seeding alfalfa and established alfalfa for hay and haylage.

The costs of growing alfalfa, corn, soybeans and wheat in Wisconsin are predicted to be roughly 14% higher in 2013 than in 2012, says Ken Barnett, University of Wisconsin Extension educator. Fertilizer and pesticide prices are expected to be more than 5% higher; seed prices are likely to be higher due to the drought.

"When deciding how much of an input to apply, producers can maximize their investment in that input by considering its marginal rate of return," says Barnett.

To download the calculator, go to the [UW's Farm Team Web site](#). Look in the Enterprise Budgets heading, then go to the Field Crop section.

For more information, contact Barnett at 715-355-4561 or ken.barnett@ces.uwex.edu. (SOURCE: *Hay & Forage Growers*, Jan. 8, 2013)

CO-GRAZING BEEF CATTLE AND GOATS IN KENTUCKY

Abstract-A two season grazing study of mixed (goats and beef cattle) species was conducted in 2006 and 2008 at Sebastian Farms in Breathitt County KY. The objective of this study was to determine if the order of mixed species grazing affected beef cattle and goat weight gain and goat exposure to the barber pole worm (*Haemonchus contortus*) in a rotational grazing system. In this study, two co-grazing management strategies were tested. In treatment 1, goats and cattle were rotationally grazed together. In treatment 2, goats rotated through pastures as first grazers followed by cattle. Each co-grazing treatment was assigned a set of four pastures similar in size, terrain and plant species composition. The stocking rate for each treatment was approximately 1.2 acres per animal unit (1 animal unit = 1,000 lbs live weight). Animal performance data was collected every 30 days during the grazing season. In 2007, the study was suspended due to extreme drought conditions. In 2006 and 2008 goat weight gain and FAMACHA scores were not affected by grazing treatment. In 2006, cattle weight gain was slightly higher for cows grazing with goats. In contrast, cows following goats in 2008 had the greatest weight gain. Based on field observations, beef cattle and goats were compatible grazers and no herd health issues were related to mixed species grazing during this study. (SOURCE: *David Ditsch, UK Agronomy Ext. Spec., Plant and Soil Sciences Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012*)

U.S. HAY CUPBOARDS NEARLY BARE, SAYS USDA

HAY STORED ON FARMS DOWN 16% FROM 2011 LEVEL

All hay stored on U.S. farms on Dec. 1 totaled 76.5 million tons, according to a [USDA Crop Production](#) report issued last Friday. That's down 16% compared to the year-earlier figure and the lowest Dec. 1 stocks level since 1957. Also in the report, USDA noted that hay disappearance from May 1 to Dec. 1, 2012, totaled 64.7 million tons compared to 62.7 million tons for the same period in 2011.

In a [Crop Production 2012 Summary](#) report also released Friday, USDA estimated U.S. production of all dry hay in 2012 at 120 million tons, down 2% from the Oct. 1 forecast and down 9% from the 2011 total. It's the lowest U.S. production level since 1964.

For alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures, the ag department estimated total 2012 production at 52 million tons. That's down 6% from the Oct. 1 forecast and down 20% from the year-earlier figure. Production has not been this low since 1953. Due in large part to dry weather that resulted in poor yields in the central and northern Great Plains, Midwest and Northern Tier, production decreased by 21% or more in 15 of the 42 reporting states.

Seedings of alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures increased to 2.39 million acres in 2012, 3% more than were seeded in 2011. That's the first increase in seeded area since 2005. (SOURCE: *Hay & Forage Grower*, Jan. 15, 2013)



Photo: Fae Holin

COMPARISON OF ERGOVALINE CONCENTRATION IN BAROPTIMA PLUS E34 TALL FESCUE AND CONTROL VARIETIES

ABSTRACT: Fescue toxicosis is a widespread problem among livestock grazing on tall fescue. Two common problems are low weight gain in cattle and reproductive problems in late term mares. Fescue toxicosis is caused by the mycotoxin ergovaline, an ergot alkaloid produced by a fungal endophyte that exists symbiotically within certain varieties of tall fescue. However, the fungal endophyte imparts drought and disease resistance and overall hardiness to the fescue making it popular for forage. Methods have been developed to combine tall fescue cultivars with types of fungal endophytes that promote hardiness without producing large amounts of ergot alkaloids, and specifically those that produce zero to low amounts of ergovaline.

To test the relative levels of ergovaline, samples of three different varieties of tall fescue: Kentucky 31+ (endophyte infected), Kentucky 31- (endophyte-free), and BarOptima Plus E34 were taken at five times throughout the growing season (April through November). The concentrations were tested by doing a solvent extraction and using HPLC. The study found that the concentrations varied throughout the growing season, but the levels in BarOptima Plus E34 averaged below 100 parts per billion with a range of 0 to 274 ppb between individual plots. These results suggest that BarOptima Plus E34 should be safe for cattle. Horses during their last trimester are much more sensitive to ergovaline, therefore BarOptima Plus E34 is not recommended for late term pregnant mares since symptoms can be present at ergovaline levels as low as 150 ppb. If the ergovaline levels reported in this research are consistent across other environments, BarOptima Plus E34 should be a safe forage for other classes of horses. (SOURCE: *Erin Greene, S. Ray Smith, Krista Cotton and David Davis IN AFGC Proceedings & Abstracts, January 6-9, 2013, Covington, KY*)

Beware of Emotional Decisions

During the American Forage & Grassland Conference in Covington, Kentucky I had the pleasure of hearing some great speakers. One of these individuals is my dear friend Russell Hackley who was an invited speaker at the Dow Pasture Symposium along with Bill Payne, both outstanding Kentucky producers. Russell advised the audience to "Beware of Emotional Decisions", relating to forage-livestock management. I have thought of the wisdom of that statement relating to forages and also realize it applies to ALL areas of life. Thanks Russell for the lesson.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- FEB 2 Kentucky Small Ruminant Grazing Conference, Morehead State University Farm, Morehead
- FEB 21 33rd Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Fayette County Extension Office, Lexington
- FEB 25-26 29th Annual SW Missouri Spring Forage Conference & 12th Annual Heart of America Grazing Conference

Garry D. Lacefield
Extension Forage Specialist
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