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FORAGE NEWS

 Research & Education Center
 Princeton, KY 42445

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

July 2012

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

DROUGHT AND FORAGES

I am always reluctant to remind you of the obvious. You and I both know it is dry and hot and forages have/are and will continue to suffer. You also know "there are no silver bullet management strategies". All forages require water for germination, growth and development. The most important thing I can suggest at present is: Don't waste what we have. Use wise grazing management and for those who are feeding hay, certainly we want to minimize waste during feeding. Only a small group of plants have the potential for growth if planted now. These are the warm season annual group (sorghum, sudan, pearl millet, soybeans and teff); HOWEVER, all require water to germinate and grow. Some have the potential for Prussic acid and Nitrate poisoning.

KENTUCKY HAY GROWER WINS NATIONAL HAY AWARDS

Hart County hay producer Clayton Gerald dominated the AFGC National Quality Hay Contest. He won first place in the Alfalfa Division, first place in the Alfalfa-Grass and second place in the Perennial Cool-Season Grass Division.

Congratulations Clayton and Christopher on these National Awards.

KFGC FIELD DAY TO BE IN HART COUNTY

Each year the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council holds a statewide field day. The event is moved throughout Kentucky. This year's event will be held September 6 in Hart County on the Gerald Farm. The Gerald Farm is one of the leading Commercial Hay Farms in the state BUT will feature more than hay. The planning committee is working on the program and will include, grazing alfalfa, rotational grazing, establishment, soils & fertility, pest control, innovations in haymaking, hay quality and storage.

More details in future issues of Forage News. For now, mark your calendar for September 6 to attend an afternoon-evening field day with meal.

NATIVE WARM-SEASON GRASSES IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Approximately one hundred people attended the intensive in-service training on Warm Season Grasses in Hart County. Participants represented NRCS, Wildlife Biologists, Department of Fish & Wildlife, Industry representatives and producers. The training was conducted jointly by University of Kentucky and University of Tennessee. Our thanks to University of Tennessee personnel Dr. Pat Keyser, Dr. Gary Bates, Dr. Elizabeth Doxon and Dr. John Waller. We also thank Randy & John Seymour and all the fine folks at Roundstone Native Seed for hosting the event and opening their farm for the tours. Appreciation is extended to Chris Clark, Hart County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources for handling local arrangements.

If you were not able to attend and would be interested in any of the presentations, see our website for the PDF version of each.

AFGC NATIONAL TOUR

A very big thank you to the Arkansas Forage and Grassland Council for hosting a great National Tour in Rogers, AR. Great tour, great weather and a good time had by all.

IF BALING HAY WET, WATCH FOR FIRES

Growers baling and storing hay that's 20% or higher in moisture should diligently check its temperature to avoid possible hay fires. As stacked hay's temperatures rise, the risk of spontaneous combustion also increases, warns Penn State Extension forage specialist Marvin Hall.

The slightest odor of smoldering hay, or a haystack that's warm or hot to the touch, signals that a fire may already be burning, he says. The only way to determine the severity of the problem is to take temperature readings of the stack. Hall suggests the following guidelines:

As stack temperatures reach 150°F, check them twice daily. If possible, disassemble the stack to improve air circulation and cooling. Use caution if moving heated bales away from buildings or combustible material, as they can burst into flames when exposed to air. He suggests first wetting those bales down.

If a stack averages 160°, check its temperature every two hours. At 175°, a stack could contain hot spots or fire pockets. At this point, stop all air movement around the hay, if possible, and alert the local fire service.

At 190°, remove hot hay with the assistance of the fire service. (SOURCE: *Hay & Forage Grower, eHay Weekly, June 5, 2012*)

CUSTOM GRAZING OF STOCKER CATTLE

The number of questions received about custom grazing has seemed to increase over the last few years. Some of this interest is likely due to an increased focus on backgrounding in Kentucky, but it is also likely due to some of the attractive risk management features of custom grazing arrangements. The purpose of this article is to provide a quick overview of what custom grazing is, as well as discuss some of the key features from the perspective of both the grazer and cattle owner.

In a custom grazing system, owners of calves pay a grazer to pasture their cattle for a period of time. There are many ways in which these arrangements can be made, but two of the more common approaches are for the grazer to be paid a set amount per head or for every pound of gain while on the grazing program. Custom grazing arrangements are business agreements, and should be treated as such. I would recommend that each party agree in writing to the terms of their arrangement. In addition to payment terms, parties should also be clear on who is responsible for other expenses such as transportation, minerals, vaccines and health treatments, death loss, etc.

Custom grazing can be attractive to both parties for different reasons. In the case of the grazer, less risk is taken on and short-term capital requirements are much lower. The grazer does not bear the market risks associated with the volatile feeder cattle markets, which have created challenges for many backgrounders. Rather than market risk, graziers are primarily accepting animal performance and weather risk. If calves don't gain well on pasture, or if pasture conditions limit calf gain, the grazer does not see as much revenue. Further, the grazer does not have the capital needs compared to purchasing stockers for the grazing season. Input needs, beyond the pasture itself, are usually limited to mineral, fertilizer, lime, and other pasture maintenance expenses.

As for the cattle owner, short-term capital requirements remain high and the risk associated with the calf and feeder cattle markets is still present. However, they do shift some of the production risk to the grazer. It is also attractive to the cattle owner that the primary input

cost (feed / pasture) can be easily budgeted in a custom grazing system. Finally, in situations where backgrounders want to expand, but don't want to purchase additional pasture, custom grazing provides an opportunity to run more stockers without a great deal of long-term investment.

A lot of feeder cattle market discussion centers on price risk management, which is warranted given the recent volatility in cattle markets. Forward contracts and futures markets often are at the center of these discussions. However, custom grazing is another risk management tool that allows parties to share in the various risks associated with backgrounding. In volatile markets with increasing capital requirements, arrangements such as this are worth consideration. (*Kenny Burdine, UK Extension Economist*)

AFGC 2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 2013 AFGC Annual Conference will be held January 6-8, 2013 at the Marriott River Center in Covington, KY (the southern side of OH). To make reservations at the group rate of \$99 per night plus tax please contact the Marriott River Center at 859-261-2900 or 800-266-6605 and mention you are attending the American Forage and Grassland Council Conference.

We invite anyone interested in presenting an oral, poster or symposium presentation to complete the [Call for Presentations Form](#). You can find an agenda outline by [clicking here](#).

You may also support the conference by sponsoring or exhibiting. For more information on how to reserve a booth or sponsor the conference or specific event please visit [www.afgc.org](#).

You can also donate items to the AFGC Silent Auction. Please visit [www.afgc.org](#) for the donation form.

AFGC 2013 NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

AFGC will hold the National Forage Spokesperson, National Emerging Scientist, National Youth Essay and National Photo Contest during the 2013 Annual Conference.

- The deadline to nominate a National Forage Spokesperson is November 1, 2012. If your state competition is being held after that date please contact the AFGC Office.
- The deadline for the National Emerging Scientist Competition is September 1, 2012.
- The deadline for the National Youth Essay Competition is November 1, 2012.
- The deadline for the National Photo Contest entries is December 1, 2012.

Please take just a few minutes to review the details of each competition and submit an entry. [Click here](#) for more details.

For additional information please visit [www.afgc.org](#) anytime or email info@afgc.org or contact AFGC at 800.944.2342.

REDUCING ENERGY USE IN PRODUCTION AGRICULTURE

Running a farm takes a lot of energy—in more ways than one. In 2009, Minnesota's 81,000 farms spent more than \$700 million on transportation fuel and an additional \$160 million on electricity.

Energy use on Minnesota farms and production facilities varies considerably depending on the type and size of the operation. For dairy farms, electricity is the biggest energy cost, used for collecting and cooling milk. Grain producers use significant amounts of diesel fuel to plant and harvest their crops.

University of Minnesota Extension is researching ways to improve on-farm energy efficiency. Several Extension faculty and staff have recently become certified energy auditors through the Farm Energy Auditor Training Program, and as part of the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs), Extension is working with utilities across the state to design incentive programs that meet the needs of farmers.

We recommend these first steps for producers who want to lower their energy use and costs:

Replace old equipment with energy-efficient models. For example, consider replacing old livestock ventilation fans with more energy-efficient fans. The USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) has seen great success in Minnesota by replacing old grain dryers with new, more energy-efficient models. In many cases, the higher-efficiency equipment will be more expensive to purchase than the less efficient option, but the lower operating costs of these more efficient units can often provide a payback of those extra costs in the first year.

Clean and maintain your equipment. In an average mechanically ventilated livestock barn, cleaning and maintenance of

the shutters on the exhaust fans can result in energy savings of 40%.

Ask your energy supplier or utility about energy saving programs. There are several available programs for which you may qualify, through the utility or through the federal rural energy efficiency programs such as A REAP and USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Some utilities also offer "off-peak" electric rates that can be half the cost of standard rates. Get an energy audit. An energy audit or assessment will tell you how much energy you're using and what part of your operation you should target for energy use reduction. A list of farm energy auditors is available through the REAP offices by contacting Ron Omann at (651) 602-7796 or ron.omann@mn.usda.gov or through The Minnesota Project by reaching Jake Fischer at (651) 789-3330 or jfischer@mnproject.org. Local utilities can also refer farmers to energy auditors.

For more information about energy efficiency, visit www.extension.umn.edu/energy. (*SOURCE: Crop News Weekly 6-20-2012*)

OHIO STATE ALFALFA ENTERPRISE BUDGETS ONLINE

Alfalfa hay and haylage are among the crops covered in the 2012 [Farm Management Enterprise Budgets](#) from Ohio State University (OSU) Extension.

"One of the real benefits of using enterprise budgets is that they help you to not forget expenses that should be included in the planning or budgeting process," says Dianne Shoemaker, OSU Extension's dairy financial management specialist. "The budgets don't just look at cash, or variable, expenses (seed, fertilizer, sprays and fuel). They also take into consideration the overhead, or fixed, costs such as charges for land, labor and management and machinery and equipment."

The OSU budgets are in a downloadable Excel spreadsheet format. Users can input production and price levels to calculate farm-specific numbers. Color-coded cells allow users to plug in numbers to easily calculate bottom lines for different scenarios. Detailed footnotes are included to help explain methodologies used to obtain the budget numbers. Also included is a date in the upper right-hand corner of the front page indicating when the last update occurred. (*SOURCE: Hay & Forage Grower, eHay Weekly, May 1, 2012*)

THE DIVERSE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF U.S. BEEF COW-CALF FARMS

ABSTRACT: Beef cow-calf production in the United States is widespread, occurring in every State. Nearly 765,000 farms, about 35 percent of the 2.2 million farms in the United States, had a beef cow inventory in 2007. Most of these were small, part-time operations. About a third of farms that raise beef animals had a beef cow inventory of less than 10 cows, more than half had fewer than 20 cows, and nearly 80 percent had fewer than 50 cows. In this study, Economic Research Service (ERS) uses data from USDA's 2008 Agricultural Resource Management Survey for U.S. beef cow-calf operations to examine the structure, costs, and characteristics of beef cow-calf producers. Many small operations are "rural residence farms" that specialize in beef cow-calf production, but their income from off-farm sources exceeds that from the farm. Most beef cow-calf production occurs on large farms, but cow-calf production is not the primary enterprise on many of these farms. Findings suggest that operators of beef cow-calf farms have a diverse set of goals for the cattle enterprise.

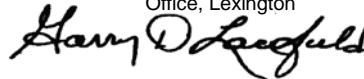
For complete report go to www.ers.usda.gov or receive a paper copy by calling 1-800-363-2068 (*SOURCE: ERS USDA Economic Information Bulletin #73. William D. McBride and Kenneth Mathews, Jr.*)

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUL 10 Advanced Grazing School, C. Oran Little Research Center, Versailles
SEP 6 KFGC Field Day, Hart County
SEP 27 UK Beef Bash, U.K. Research & Education Center, Princeton
OCT 30 Kentucky Grazing Conference, U.K. Research & Education Center, Princeton

2013

FEB 21 33rd Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Fayette County Extension Office, Lexington



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