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Forage News

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## Forage News [2011-03]

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky

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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>

## March 2011

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

### KENTUCKY ALFALFA AWARDS

The 2011 Kentucky Alfalfa Awards were presented at the 31<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference held February 24, 2011. Recipients of these prestigious awards were:

Charles Schnitzler Alfalfa Producer Award – Todd Clark Warren Thompson Alfalfa Industry Award – Bill Bracy Garry D. Lacefield Public Service Award – Dr. Dan Undersander
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Congratulations Todd, Bill and Dan!

### KFGC UPDATE

The Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council Board of Directors met on February 23, 2011. Highlights of the Board meeting included:

- voted to financially support KY Forage Bowl Teams and 2011 KFGC Forage Spokesperson to attend the American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) annual meeting
- committee reports from Nominating, Forage Spokesperson, Industry and Membership committees
- updates on Master Grazer, Grazing School and Switchgrass/Biomass programs
- Kevin Lyons, Monroe County Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent, was elected as 2<sup>nd</sup> vice-president
- Scott Cooper, president-elect, updated Board members on the need for producers to fill out the Monsanto Technology/Stewardship Agreement before they can purchase Roundup Ready alfalfa seed.

Four KY producers showcased their forage enterprises during the KFGC Forage Spokesperson contest, which was a part of the 31<sup>st</sup> Alfalfa conference. Contestants included: Weldon Hawkins of Hart County, Craig Cohron of Butler County, Adam Wheatley of Nelson County and Will Bowling of Clay County. Congratulations to Weldon Hawkins who won the contest and will represent KY at the AFGC annual meeting in French Lick, Indiana.

Each year, KFGC recognizes four outstanding leaders for their hard work and dedication to KFGC and KY's forage industry. These individuals included: Jim Landis, Grassroots Award; Tommy Yankey, County Public Award; Dr. Laurie Lawrence, State Public Award; and Jon Doran, Industry Award.

For more information on KFGC and upcoming forage programs go to [www.kfgc.org](http://www.kfgc.org) or UK's forage website at [www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage). (SOURCE: Don Sorrell, KFGC Past President)

### GRAZING SCHOOL OFFERS CLASSROOM AND FIELD (HANDS-ON) ACTIVITIES

The Kentucky Grazing School will be held April 13 & 14, 2011 at the UKREC in Princeton. Registration is limited to 45 in order to accommodate full activities including fence building, water system installation, pasture evaluation and determining pasture carrying capacity.

Programs begin on April 13 at 7:30 a.m. with registration and refreshments.

### Wednesday April 13, 2011

- 7:30 Registration & refreshments
- 8:00 Introduction of staff and participants
- 8:15 Benefits of rotational grazing – Garry Lacefield
- 8:45 Growth of grasses and legumes and their response to grazing – Ray Smith
- 9:30 Understanding traditional forages – Garry Lacefield
- 9:50 Forages for problem times – Ray Smith
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Forage Establishment – Ray Smith
- 11:00 Extending the grazing season: plant considerations – Garry Lacefield
- 11:30 Meeting nutritional needs on pasture – Donna Amaral-Phillips
- 12:15 Lunch
- 1:00 Fence chargers for effective grazing – Jeremy McGill
- 1:20 Grazing Math Concepts – Jeff Lehmkuhler
- 1:50 Travel to field site
- 2:00 Introduction to temporary fence and setting up water systems– Jeremy McGill
- 2:15 Hands-on building a rotational grazing system in the field: assessing pasture yield and setting up small paddocks – Smith and Lehmkuhler
- 4:00 Fence building: Understanding how to build and use temporary fencing and high tensile fencing. – Jeremy McGill
- 5:00 Methods to assess pasture production and determine stocking rate: Grazing Stick, Hand sampling, Rising plate meter
- 6:00 Adjourn for the day- Supper on your own

### Thursday April 14, 2011

- 7:30 Refreshments
  - 8:00 Extending the grazing season: animal considerations – Roy Burris
  - 8:30 Value of shade and water – Jeff Lehmkuhler
  - 9:00 Portable/seasonal water systems – Kevin Laurent
  - 9:25 Cost share programs from NRCS
  - 9:45 Break
  - 10:00 Minerals for grazing cattle. – Donna Amaral-Phillips
  - 10:45 Parasite control and rotational grazing – Michelle Arnold
  - 11:15 Fundamentals of laying out a grazing system. – Ray Smith
  - 11:45 Lunch
  - 12:30 Producer panel
  - 2:15 Designing your own grazing system- all
  - 3:00 Travel to field site
  - 3:15 Field exercise. Observe grazed paddocks and hear reports of each group
  - 4:30 Tour demonstration plots of spring grazing options
  - 5:00 Graduation and final comments
  - 5:30 Adjourn
- Registration fee is \$50.00 which includes materials, grazing manual, breaks and two lunches. To register, make checks payable to:

**Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council** and send to  
 Arleen Smith, N-222 Ag. Science North  
 University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0091  
 For more information, contact Dr. Ray Smith, UK Plant and Soil Sciences, phone 859.257.3358, fax 859.323.1952, email: raysmith1@uky.edu

## ROUNDUP READY® ALFALFA

The most significant thing in alfalfa varieties for 2011 was the January 27, 2011 decision by USDA to deregulate Roundup Ready Alfalfa (RRA) without conditions. This was the final step in an extensive environmental review process by the USDA over the last 46 months. If you would like to know more about the safety of Roundup Ready Alfalfa you can review the complete Environmental Impact Statement at: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/downloads/alfalfa/gt\\_alfalfa%20feis.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/downloads/alfalfa/gt_alfalfa%20feis.pdf). Most importantly, seed dealers in Kentucky and surrounding states should hopefully have Roundup varieties for this spring seedings.

## ASH CONTENT IN HAY

Ash in forage comes from two sources: internal, e.g. minerals like calcium, magnesium, potassium and phosphorus, and external, e.g. dirt, bedding, sand, etc. The average internal ash content of alfalfa is about 8% and of grasses is about 6%. Additional ash in a hay or silage sample is contamination with dirt, sand, etc. As shown in table 2, a summary of ash content of forage samples submitted to the University of Wisconsin Soil and Forage Analysis Laboratory, the average ash content of haylage is 12.3% and of hay is 10.3%. Assuming the silage is mainly alfalfa and the hay has a higher percentage of grass, forage samples are averaging about 4% ash contamination from external sources. Note that some samples have been as high as 18%. This means some farmers have fed almost 1 pound of dirt for each 5 pounds of hay or silage!

Type	Statistic	% Ash
Haylage	Average	12.3
	Maximum	18.0
	Minimum	5.7
Hay	Average	10.3
	Maximum	17.6
	Minimum	8.8

(SOURCE: Dr. Dan Undersander, 31<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference Proceedings, Vol 31, #3, February 2011)

## CAUTION ADVISED WITH GRAZING & CUTTING HEIGHTS OF ORCHARDGRASS

I have had many questions over the past several years about Orchardgrass persistence including why these new varieties of orchardgrass won't last longer, etc. To date, we have not found a "new" disease or insect that can account for overall decline. Fertility can certainly affect stand life of any crop, but I cannot attribute low fertility with overall stand decline over the state. The factors that I feel can explain much of this has to do with weather and grazing/cutting height. We have had four bad years and many of our Orchardgrass pastures were overgrazed and abused resulting in low grazing height. With the advent of disk mowers close cutting can be accomplished with ease. In fact, many recommend cutting alfalfa as close as possible without injuring crowns (we know that close cuttings will result in more ash in the hay and reduced quality however). Cutting orchardgrass at 1-2 inches repeatedly will certainly reduce stand life. Optimum cutting/grazing heights for orchardgrass is 3.5-4.0 inches. If you have experienced stand decline, take a look at your cutting/grazing height and see if it could be too low.

## HEART OF AMERICA GRAZING CONFERENCE

### PROCEEDINGS & PHOTOS

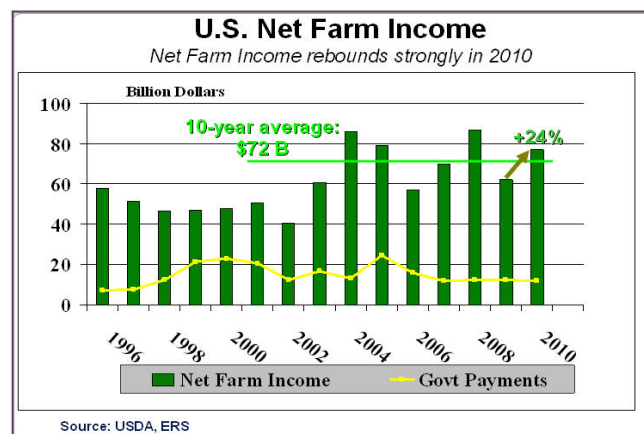
Proceedings from the 10<sup>th</sup> Heart of America Grazing Conference held in Louisville January 25-26 have been posted on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ProceedingsPage.htm>. My thanks to Christi Forsythe for keeping our website up-to-date.

Photo highlights of the conference are also posted on the same page. Thanks to Adam Probst for furnishing photos.

## AGRICULTURE RETURNS AS A BRIGHT SPOT IN THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

The U.S. economy is struggling to recover from the longest, deepest recession since World War II. Economic growth has been positive for four quarters, but housing foreclosures continue unabated, the FDIC has closed 118 banks this year, the unemployment rate remains stubbornly above 9%, and UK graduates are facing the toughest job market in memory.

Amidst this macroeconomic environment, agriculture is one of the bright spots in the slow economic recovery. When the global recession hit agriculture last year, total cash receipts from farming dropped 11% and net farm income plunged 28%. But with the improvements in the global economy and rising exports, USDA is now estimating total cash receipts will be about \$302 billion, not as much as the record-high in 2008, but still a \$20 billion jump in overall revenue to the sector. Net farm income will rise 24% this year to \$77 billion – well above the 10-year average of \$65 billion.



The rebound in net farm income is being led by improvements on the livestock side. With higher prices in dairy, cattle, and hogs, total cash receipts for livestock will be up \$17 billion this year. The surge in corn prices – jumping 25% since July -- will also have a positive impact on total crop receipts, which will be up modestly over last year if harvest continues normally.

Will Kentucky numbers follow the positive U.S. trends for cash receipts and net farm income? In recent years financial performance in Kentucky agriculture has mirrored the national trend. We will need to watch the market for horses, which is showing some promising signs but has clearly not recovered from the global recession. For 2009, our estimate for total cash receipts was \$4.289 billion and the actual number released by USDA-NASS a few weeks ago was \$4.26 billion. Our forecast for cash receipts in 2010 was \$4.26 billion, which should be low given the big improvements in dairy, cattle, and hogs, plus the surge in corn prices this year. The Agricultural Economics department will make a new estimate in November and release it at the Farm Bureau Press Conference the first week of December. (Craig Infanger, UK Agricultural Economist)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- APR 13-14 Kentucky Grazing School, UK Research & Education Center, Princeton
- JUN 13-15 AFGC Annual Meeting, French Lick, IN
- JUL 21 UK All Commodity Field Day, Princeton

*Garry D. Lacefield*

Garry D. Lacefield  
Extension Forage Specialist  
March 2011