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Forage News [2011-01]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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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>

January 2011

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

FORAGES AT KCA

Our Forages at KCA program will be on Friday, January 14, 2011 in Heritage Ballrooms 2 and 3 of the Lexington Convention Center.

The program will begin at 1:00. Speakers and topics include:

- Forages Back to Basics - Dr. Garry Lacefield
- Hay for Horses: Needs and Wants - Dr. Laurie Lawrence
- Strategies to Reduce Animal Losses from: Bloat-Nitrates-Prussic Acid - Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler
- Endophyte in Tall Fescue: Impact on Horses and Cattle - Dr. Ray Smith

- Controlling Weeds in Horse/Cattle Pastures - Dr. Byron Sleugh
 - Putting the Pieces Together - Dr. Garry Lacefield
- A proceedings, along with other publications, will be available.

SMALL RUMINANT GRAZING CONFERENCE

The 2011 Kentucky Small Ruminant Grazing Conference will be held in Elizabethtown at the Hardin County Extension Office January 15, 2011. See UK Forage Website <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/Small%20Ruminant%20Grazing%20Conference%202011.pdf> for program, registration information and directions.

MID-SOUTH STOCKER CONFERENCE

The Mid-South Stocker Conference will be held February 21-22 at the Holiday Inn University Plaza and Sloan Convention Center in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

For details concerning program and registration, please call Roy Burris, 270-365-7541 (208), Jeff Lehmkuhler, 859-257-2853 or Jim Neel, 865-974-7294 or visit <http://www.midsouthstocker.org>.

KENTUCKY'S AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

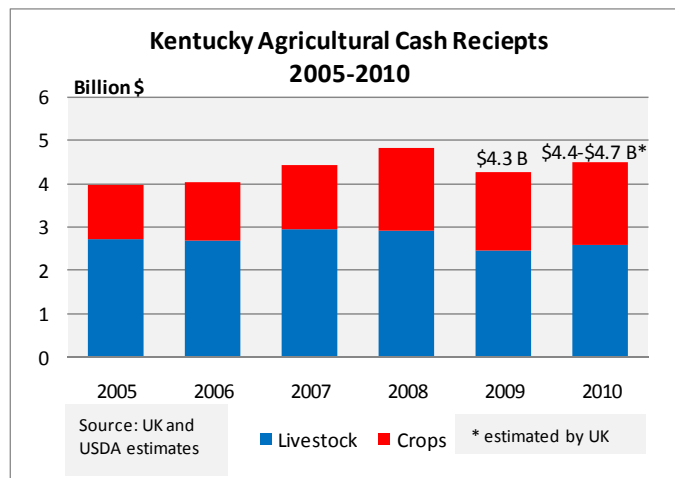
2010 Review: U.S. agriculture rebounded quickly from the effects of the commodity market 'crash' in 2008 and the serious global recession in 2009. USDA is projecting U.S. net farm income to be up 24% this year. Most of the increase in farm income is coming from improved market conditions for beef cattle, dairy, poultry, and recent surges in corn and soybean prices. The balance sheet for ag is strong, despite the weak macroeconomy.

The most important factor behind the improved economics for agriculture is the revival of ag export markets. After plunging from a record high \$115 billion in 2008 down to \$96 billion last year, ag exports have rebounded to a projected \$113 billion for 2010. Larger volumes of grain exports at higher prices, as well as improved horticulture and meat exports, are behind the reversal. After a short dip in 2009, food imports are forecast to be another record-high next year as economic recovery continues.

As a result of these market forces, Kentucky's farm economy had a better year in 2010. Total cash receipts are estimated to be \$4.4 to \$4.7 billion, up at least \$100-300 million over 2009 and well above the 10-year average of \$4 billion. Net farm income this year (excluding government payments) will be \$1.3 billion – just below the state's 10-year average. With ag exports booming and the economy in slow recovery, both cash receipts and net farm income for 2010 should be significantly higher, with a positive outlook for 2011.

Poultry is now solidly the #1 source of cash receipts in the state as growth in that sector continues. Equine receipts showed slight improvement from 2009, but will remain a distant second. Improving corn prices worked to offset disappointing yields to round out the top

three cash generators for Kentucky agriculture. Had weather been more favorable in the state, grain receipts could have been significantly higher. (SOURCE: Craig Infanger & Kenny Burdine, UK Agricultural Economists)



FORAGE VARIETY TEST RESULTS

Thanks to the hard work of Gene Olsen, we now have 8 Variety Test Reports available on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ForageVarietyTrials2.htm>

REGIONAL GRAZING CONFERENCE COMING TO LOUISVILLE - REGISTER NOW!

The 10th Annual Heart of America Grazing Conference is returning to Kentucky. It will be held January 25 & 26 at the Holiday Inn Hurstbourne in Louisville. The Conference rotates among five states (Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky).

The program will feature leading speakers from all five states concerning topics of interest to all producers interested in grazing. In addition to informative presentations, a silent auction and trade show will be featured. The program gets underway January 25 at 2:00 p.m. EST with exhibit set-up. Registration begins at 3:00 p.m. Program includes:

January 25, 2011

- 2:00 p.m. Exhibit Set-up
- 3:00 p.m. Registration, Exhibits and Silent Auction
- 5:30 Welcome, Invocation & Dinner
 - Dr. Garry Lacefield, University of Kentucky
 - Kentucky Agriculture
 - Dr. Jimmy Henning, University of Kentucky
 - Forages Around the World: Observations & Reflections
 - Dr. Garry Lacefield

January 26, 2011

- 7:00 a.m. Registration, Exhibits, Silent Auction
- 8:15 Welcome – Dr. Garry Lacefield
- 8:30 From Confinement to Grazing
 - Mr. Bill Payne, Producer, Lincoln Co. KY

- 9:00 How much Pasture do I have and how long will it Feed my Cows?
– Dr. Ray Smith, University of Kentucky
- 9:30 Tall Fescue – Endophyte – Animal Performance
– Dr. Glen Aiken, USDA/ARS, Kentucky
- 10:00 Break, Exhibits & Silent Auction
- 10:30 Organic Dairying: Role of Grazing
– Mr. Jake Schmitz, Ohio Valley Regional Coord., Organic Valley Coop.
- 11:30 Mob Grazing, High Density Grazing, Management-intensive Grazing: What's the Difference?
– Mr. Mark Kennedy, NRCS, Missouri
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Silent Auction Results
- 1:15 Integrated Weed Management for Enhancing Productivity of Grazed Pastures
– Dr. J.D. Green, University of Kentucky
- 1:45 Grazing Goats and Cattle and Other Co-species Grazing
– Mr. Jason Tower, Purdue University
- 2:15 Grazing Corn, Brassicas, Chicory, Eastern Gamagrass, Ryegrass, Oats and Other Non-Traditional Forages
– Mr. Jeff McCutcheon, Ohio State University
- 2:45 Extending the Grazing Season and Reducing Stored Feed Needs
– Mr. Ed Ballard, University of Illinois
- 3:15 Adjourn

ALFALFA – TALL FESCUE ROW ORIENTATION / COMPATIBILITY COMPARISONS ON ESTABLISHMENT AND PERSISTENCE UNDER GRAZING

Abstract - In ideal forage production environments, mixtures of perennial grasses and perennial legumes in pastures are successfully used in grazing systems. However, due to limiting environmental resources in the southern Great Plains of U.S., it has been nearly impossible to grow mixtures of warm-season and cool-season crops together, because one species usually dominates. A RCBD experiment was initiated in Vernon, TX (Wichita clay loam), Vashti, TX, (Anocon loam) and Ardmore, OK (Heiden clay) during the fall of 2008 in an attempt to minimize preferential grazing while maintaining adequate stand density and persistence of both alfalfa and tall fescue by evaluating three row orientations. The row orientation treatments included perpendicular rows, alternating drill rows, and a combination of both alternating and perpendicular drill row orientations. Both alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L 'Bulldog 505' planted 0.25 in depth at 12 lb PLS/acre) and tall fescue (*Lolium arundinaceum* (Schreb.) S.J. Darbyshire = *Festuca arundinacea* Schreb. 'Flecha MaxQ' planted 0.25-0.5 in depth at 15 PLS/A) were planted utilizing a Great Plains no-till drill with 7.5" row spacing. The perpendicular drill row orientation was achieved by planting tall fescue followed by alfalfa, making two separate passes, with each planted on 7.5 in spacing. Alternating drill rows were achieved by utilizing the grain box to plant the fescue on 15 inch spacing and the legume box to plant the alfalfa in the adjacent rows, also on 15 inch spacing. The combination of alternating and perpendicular orientation was achieved by utilizing both boxes as before, but at half the seeding rate and planting in two separate passes. Initial seedling counts 30 days after emergence (DAE) were recorded and percent composition was recorded 6, 12, and 18 months after planting (MAP). Initial stand counts indicated adequate plant numbers of both species to consider establishment successful in all three row orientations at all locations. Botanical composition estimates 6 MAP generally resulted in greater compositions of alfalfa, especially in the perpendicular row orientation. At the Vernon location, tall fescue did not persist through the summer in any of three row orientations. By 18 MAP, the perpendicular 7.5" treatment resulted in lower percentages of tall fescue (19-23%) compared to alfalfa (66-76%), at the Ardmore and Vashti locations. Both alternating drill row and combination alternating and perpendicular row orientation treatments resulted in adequate persistence (51-64% alfalfa; 35-40% tall fescue) 18 MAP. The alternating and perpendicular planting orientation consistently creates a 'checkerboard' matrix of established plants and offers potential to minimize preferential grazing while maintaining adequate stand density and persistence of both alfalfa and tall fescue. (SOURCE: Jimmy D. Stein, Twain J. Butler, and Dariusz Malinowski IN AFGC Proceedings, Springfield, MO, June 2010)

WHY GRAZE

In my thirty years of milking cows, I've had few complaints about the price of milk. Most of the time the producer gets his fair share of the price milk brings at the local supermarket. I know I wouldn't want the headaches of being a processor or distributor, so why haven't I got my farm paid for in the last 25 years. It's because my cost of production is too high. In the roaring 70's I cut costs by expanding the milking herd, grouping the herd according to production and feeding a TMR, and harvesting more and more silage. But every time I added cows or machinery it meant more management, more labor and more debt.

When I had to replace the worn out equipment needed to handle the expanded herd and TMR feeding, it had doubled in price but my milk price was only up about 20%. That same squeeze continued with labor costs and all the things that go into dairying. Everyone who was considered an expert said you had to continue to expand to spread your costs over more production. But I really was managing to my personal capacity and had no desire to increase the stress load. I told my banker that I had cut my costs as much as I possibly could and that I apparently was not a good enough manager to make it in the dairy business in the 90's.

Then while attending a forage council meeting in Illinois, I heard Dr. David Zartman talk about a project in Marooning County Ohio. They had cut cost dramatically using the New Zealand system of rotational grazing along with seasonal dairying. My wife and I talked all the way home from Ill. about the system and how close my father had been to doing that way back in the 50's. I remember it well because it was usually my job to move the fence each afternoon while dad was milking. Things had really changed though, fencing equipment had gotten much more sophisticated, and the New Zealanders had learned how to manage the pastures so that the cows always had forage at the peak nutrient value. To my surprise the cost of fencing equipment wasn't much higher than it had been when dad was doing it in the 50's. Besides that if the cows ate it in the field I didn't have to store it and feed it or haul it away as manure so my machinery didn't wear out as fast and I wouldn't need to replace it as often. I began rereading old farm magazines, surprisingly some of them had articles about rotational grazing, but since I wasn't looking for them the first time I had missed the stories. I talked to every extension person I could find, about grazing, with little help. At that time Dr. Tim Johnson area dairy specialists had just arrived in Indiana and I found that he was aware of some grazing operations in Wisconsin. Tim along with, then Noble County Ag agent Greg Booher, set up a group of Northern Indiana dairy farmers for a three day trip to see several operations there. We all returned with a better understanding of how grazing could work in our own operations.

Since that time it has become easy for me to explain Why I would want to graze my dairy herd. My overall costs of production are down dramatically. I have sold off unneeded machinery, knowing that I will never need it again. The machinery I do need is used much less than before, so it lasts longer. Cattle eat all their forage needs in the paddocks summer and winter (except for a few muddy days) so the manure hauling is quite simple. Overall herd health is much improved. Cows that get plenty of exercise do much better than cows which are confined. Fuel and repair cost are down considerably with less harvesting and feeding.

The mental challenge of managing a grazing system is intense but is not stressful. It's a matter of learning to adapt to and change in conditions. It also involves better stockmanship than what I used in a conventional system. It takes time to learn the system and it can be somewhat different for every farm and manager. But for me, the challenge of learning something new every day and profiting from it makes it all worthwhile. (SOURCE: Dave Forgey, Dairy Grazer, Logansport, Indiana)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- JAN 14 Forages at KCA, Lexington
JAN 15 KY Small Ruminant Grazing Conference, Elizabethtown
JAN 25-26 Heart of America Grazing Conference, Louisville
FEB 21-22 Mid-South Stocker Conference, Bowling Green
FEB 24 31st Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Lexington
JUL 21 UK All Commodity Field Day, Princeton



Garry D. Lacefield
Extension Forage Specialist
January 2011