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## Forage News [2008-08]

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky

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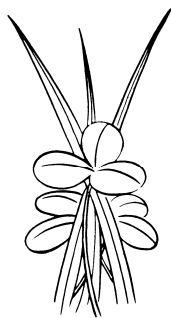
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# FORAGE NEWS

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

**August 2008**

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

## HISTORY MAKING GRASSLAND MEETING

For the first time in history, the International Grassland Congress and the International Rangeland Congress met jointly. In addition, it was the first time ever either of these groups met in China. The meeting was held in Hohhot Inner Mongolia China and was attended by over 1500 people from 77 different countries. Three faculty members from the U.K. Department of Plant and Soil Sciences made presentations and/or presented posters at the meeting (Dr. Garry Lacefield, Dr. Ray Smith and Dr. Lowell Bush).

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is located in north China. It borders Heilong Jiang, Liaoning, Jilin, Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces as well as Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. It borders Russia and Mongolia in the north with a boundary line as long as 4,250 kilometers.

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was established on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1947, the first autonomous region established in China. Its capital city is Hohhot (also called Green City).

## KFGC FIELD DAY

The Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council Field Day will be September 4, 2008 in Fairview Kentucky on the John Nowak farm. The farm is located on 68/80 between Hopkinsville and Elkton. Registration begins at 2:00 p.m. and tours begin at 2:30 and will be repeated before the rib-eyes are served at 6:30. Following the meal a "Blue Ribbon Panel" of Commercial Hay producers will share their experiences in the hay business and entertain questions from the audience. Speakers for the two tours which will feature Grazing, Watering Systems, Fencing, Hay Marketing, Establishment & Quality Hay Products include: Dr. Garry Lacefield, Dr. Ray Smith, Mr. Tom Keene, Mr. Kevin Laurent, Mr. David Fourqurean and Mr. Jeremy McGill. Programs and directions are available at each County Extension Office and on our website at: [http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/summergrazingtour%20with%20photos%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/summergrazingtour%20with%20photos%20(2).pdf)

## STOCKPILING

With high nitrogen prices, many are wondering if it is economical to apply nitrogen to tall fescue in August to accumulate pastures for late fall and winter. Remember that "everyday grazed is money saved" compared to feeding hay or silage. If you already have more than enough hay to meet your winter needs and you don't have a good close market for your hay, then maybe this could be the year to save on your stockpiling nitrogen dollars; however, if your hay supply is still questionable and/or you want to graze as long as possible then adding 40-60 units of nitrogen to grazed or mowed tall fescue pastures in mid-August and using other pastures until they are gone before turning into stockpiled fields and "rationing the stockpiled forage" to minimize waste is still a viable consideration. For more details on stockpiling, see AGR-162 at each County Extension Office and on our website at: <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/agr/agr162/agr162.pdf>. There is also an excellent Stockpiling Decision-Aid Model developed by Dr. Greg Halich (AEC2008-06) also on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/Forage%20Decision%20Aids.htm>

## 9<sup>TH</sup> KENTUCKY GRAZING CONFERENCE - LEXINGTON, OCTOBER 23

The 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Grazing Conference is set for the Fayette County Extension Office on October 23. The program committee has done an excellent job putting together a timely agenda with excellent topics and speakers. Registration fee is \$15.00 (\$5.00 students) and includes breaks, meal, proceedings and other educational materials. No pre-registration is required. Details of the program topics and speakers are on our website at: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/9th%20KGC%20Program%20columns.pdf> and will be in next month's Forage News.

## HORSE PASTURES IN THE FALL: A PERFECT TIME TO RENOVATE

The University of Kentucky Equine Initiative in conjunction with the Jessamine County Extension Office will sponsor a conference dealing with Renovating Horse Pastures on August 26, 2008. The meeting will begin at 5:00 PM at the University Equine Humane Center at 1713 Catnip Hill in Nicholasville. A meal will be provided. To register call 859-885-4811. Program and speakers for the evening are:

- 5:00PM Registration & Exhibits
- 5:45 PM Welcome & Overview of KyEHC - Dr. Jim Smith
- 6:00PM Fescue Toxicosis: Was 2008 a Bad Year? - Dr. Ray Smith
- 6:20PM Economics: Pasture vs Hay - Mr. Kenny Burdine
- 6:45PM Rotational Grazing: Getting More from Your Pasture - Dr. Bob Coleman
- 7:15PM Fall Weed Control: Cleaner Spring Pastures - Dr. Bill Witt
- 7:45PM Fall Fertilization: Yearlong Benefits - Dr. A.J. Powell, Jr.

## BALE AT THE PROPER MOISTURE

Timing of baling is critical for maximizing the value of hay. Optimum moisture for baling is in the range of 15% to 20% moisture (wet basis). Baling at lower than 15% moisture will result in greater harvesting losses, especially for alfalfa, because leaf loss increases as moisture decreases.

Storing hay at greater than 20% moisture will result in some molding and heating, greater dry matter and nutrient loss during storage, and some discoloration. A study of small rectangular bales stored in a barn at the US Dairy Forage Research Center, Madison, Wisconsin, showed that loss of dry matter increased with storage moisture (Table 1). Loss of quality was also greater in the wetter bales.

Storage Moisture	Dry Matter Loss	Digestible Dry Matter Loss	Crude Protein Loss
11 to 20%	4.5%	6.2%	6.0%
20 to 25%	7.9	11.8	8.8
25 to 34%	10.9	13.5	7.5

(SOURCE: Pennsylvania Forage & Grassland News, Vol. 18, No. 3, Summer 2008)

## "ONE MAN'S PIE IS ANOTHER MAN'S POISON"

The argument over just how much the price of grain is affecting world food prices has reached a new level. Some contend that it is really the high price of fuel that is driving food costs upward. One report said that it couldn't be the price of grain because "there is only about six cents worth of corn in an 18-ounce box of corn flakes". We already knew that only a small percentage of the cost of food actually gets back to the farmer. However, some type of agricultural producers do have it better than others.

I was just reading a farm magazine in which a cotton producer was lamenting the rising costs of inputs like fuel, fertilizer and seed. He had to decide whether to grow cotton, soybeans or corn – all of which are at record prices. Corn prices have increased from \$2.50 to around \$6.00 a bushel with December futures now at \$6.37. I would never begrudge this farmer making a good living but I will say that his economic situation is better than most livestock operations.

The fact is any operation that depends on feed grain is struggling unless they can pass on the costs to the consumer. According to the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), U.S. pork producers lost more than \$2.1 billion in just seven months. They are now losing about \$50 on each hog marketed due to the doubling of feed costs.

Cattle operations that depend on feed grain are also feeling the pinch. Cattle producers, especially those in the southeastern United States, must lessen their dependence on feed grains. Fortunately, ruminants (like cattle) have the ability to consume large amounts of forage and to convert that feed to meat and milk. In fact, that is what they are naturally adapted for and that is what they do best. We must "put the rumen back in ruminants" to be sustainable in this part of the country. Our ability to produce forages, and the cow's ability to convert them to meat, has always been our "ace-in-the-hole".

The drought and ensuing feed shortage of last year should have taught us a couple of valuable lessons. One is that purchased feeds can be very expensive and the other is that improved pasture management systems can really pay off.

What can we do now? First, practice rotational grazing for more efficient forage utilization. Then, look at ways to extend the grazing season. Try to have something to graze during July and August. Fescue is pretty much dormant during that period of time. Summer grasses can be of benefit for both grazing or making hay. They will add some flexibility to your feeding program. You can also work on the end of the grazing season. Consider stockpiled/accumulated fescue pasture for December and January or beyond. Our goal should be to graze at least 10 months of the year. You won't likely have much pasture in February and March so you should have an adequate supply of hay available.

Backgrounding operations can work on a combination of forages and by-product feeds to lessen their dependence on feed grain. We need to get ourselves in a position where we don't have to compete with ethanol production and the world's food supply to obtain cattle feed. Forages and by-products can allow us to do that. (SOURCE: Roy Burris, UK Extension Beef Specialist)

## HAULING CHALLENGES ABOUND

Transportation continues to be a major issue for U.S. hay growers, says Ron Tombaugh, owner of Dart Hay Service in Streator, IL, and president of the National Hay Association.

Rising fuel costs are a big part of the story, of course. Tombaugh points out trucking charges have risen from a range of \$1.35-1.50/mile a year ago to the \$2.20-2.25/mile mark. "We've heard reports that there are 40,000 fewer trucks on the road in the U.S. than there were a year ago," he says. "With diesel fuel hitting \$4.50-4.75/gallon in many areas, drivers just can't make a go of it."

What's more, the truckers remaining on the road are increasingly reluctant to haul hay, Tombaugh adds. "A load of hay is typically worth \$5,000-6,000", he notes. "That's a pretty low value compared to a load of television sets or some other manufactured product. It's easier to put a fuel surcharge on those other products, because the buyer can pass it along to the end consumer. A livestock producer buying a load of hay can't tell his milk processor he should get a dollar more per hundredweight for his milk because he's paying more to have hay delivered. But that same milk processor can add transportation costs to the retail outlet buying the milk and, in turn, the retail outlet can pass costs along to the consumer."

To help level out the playing field, Tombaugh would like to see the federal government establish a fuel credit for farmers who use biodiesel or other ag-based fuels to transport agricultural commodities.

Tombaugh can be contacted at 309-531-4229 or [tombaugh@udnet.net](mailto:tombaugh@udnet.net) (SOURCE: Rick Mooney, Editor, eHay Weekly, July 1, 2008)

## U.S. HAY ACREAGE DOWN SLIGHTLY

U.S. hay growers are expected to harvest 60.4 million acres of hay in 2008, 2% fewer than in 2007, according to the June 30 Acreage Report released by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Harvested area is expected to decrease throughout the Great Plains and the West. Increases are expected along the East Coast.

For alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures, expected harvested area is 20.8 million acres, down 4% from last year's number. Acreage decreases are expected in the Corn Belt, the Southeast and most of the West, while increases are expected in the Rocky Mountain States and portions of the Northeast.

Expected harvested acreage of all other types of hay totals 39.7 million, down 1% from the 40 million acres harvested in 2007. Declines are expected in the West Coast, Southwest and Southern Great Plains regions, while increases are expected along the Atlantic Coast, northern Rockies and northern Great Plains.

Unclear is just how accurate the NASS numbers are given the effects of flooding in parts of the Midwest last month. NASS gathered the data for the report during the first two weeks of June, before much of the flooding started. It will conduct a more extensive update of planted and harvested acreage this month in areas impacted by floods. That information, along with data normally collected from across the country during this time, will be reflected in USDA's Aug. 12 Crop Production report. (SOURCE: eHay Weekly, July 8, 2008)

## KFGC AWARDS NOMINATION


Each year, the Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council presents Forage Awards to individuals that have made significant contributions to Kentucky's Forage Industry. Awards will be presented in four categories (producer, public (county and state), and industry) at the KFGC Business Meeting in conjunction with the Kentucky Grazing Conference October 23 in Lexington. To nominate a deserving individual, please send a one page nomination to Dr. Garry Lacefield, Research & Education Center, P.O. Box 469, Princeton, KY 42445 or by e-mail to [glacefie@uky.edu](mailto:glacefie@uky.edu). For a list of past award recipients, see our website <http://www.uky.edu/Aq/Forage/KFGC%20Award%20Winners%20History.pdf> Deadline for submitting nominations is September 19, 2008.

## KFGC FORAGE SPOKESMAN NOMINATIONS

Kentucky holds the national record for having more National Forage Spokesman winners than any other state. The reigning National Forage Spokesman is Barry Drury from Woodford County. We are now accepting nominations for the next Forage Spokesman Contest to be held in conjunction with the Kentucky Grazing Conference in Lexington October 23. If you would like to nominate a Kentucky Forage Producer to participate, please send a nomination to Dr. Ray Smith, Plant & Soil Science Dept., 105 Plant Science Bldg., 1405 Veterans Road, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0312 or by e-mail to [raysmith1@uky.edu](mailto:raysmith1@uky.edu). Nominations should contain nominees' name, address, and a brief (less than one page) paragraph describing the candidates forage program. **Nominations are due by September 15.**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

AUG 26	Renovating Horse Pastures, UK Equine Humane Center, Nicholasville
SEP 4	KFGC Field Day, Christian County
SEP 25	2008 All Commodity Field Day, UK Robinson Station, Jackson
OCT 23	9 <sup>th</sup> Kentucky Grazing Conference, Fayette County Extension Office, Lexington
<b>2009</b>	
JAN 6	Kentucky Small Ruminant Grazing Conference, Fayette County Extension Office
JAN 21-22	Heart of America Grazing Conference, Columbus, IN
FEB 19	29 <sup>th</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City Convention Center



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August 2008