



11-2007

Forage News [2007-11]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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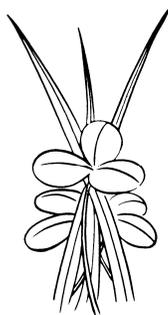


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University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, "Forage News [2007-11]" (2007). *Forage News*. 124.
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FORAGE NEWS

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

November 2007

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

KENTUCKY GRAZING CONFERENCE

Over 150 people from several states participated in the 8th Kentucky Grazing Conference held at the WKU Expo Center in Bowling Green on October 30. Topics included on the program were: Recovering from the Freeze & Drought of 2007, Stretching Hay Supplies, Grazing Methods, Options for Summer Grazing, Experiences with "Teff" Grass, Techniques for Reducing Mud Problems and Working Together on Grazing. The afternoon session featured the Forage Spokesman Contest. The Ninth Kentucky Grazing Conference will be held at the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington on October 23, 2008.

FORAGE SPOKESMAN FEATURED AT GRAZING CONFERENCE

Grazing Conference participants were treated to a special afternoon program at the Kentucky Grazing Conference. Three producers from across Kentucky were featured: Mac Stone, Georgetown; Barry Drury, Versailles; and Lowell Clifford, Cynthiana. Each did an excellent job telling the audience how they used "forages" in their family farming operation. The judges had a very difficult job selecting one to represent Kentucky at the AFGC Forage Spokesman Contest in Louisville next January. Congratulations to Barry Drury our newest Kentucky Forage Spokesman.

KFGC PRESENTS FORAGE AWARDS

The Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council presented their 2007 Annual Awards at the Kentucky Grazing Conference in Bowling Green on October 30. Recipients were:

<u>Award</u>	<u>Recipient</u>
Grassroots	John & Randy Seymour
Industry	Ralph Quillin
Public Service (County)	Rick Greenwell
Public Service (State)	Lowell Bush

Congratulations John, Randy, Ralph, Rick & Lowell.

SOURCES FOR HAY

All farmers and cattlemen know that the easiest and usually the least expensive source of hay is from your neighbors, but over the last year weather conditions have often limited local supplies. There are a number of ways to find and secure hay from other parts of the state and country. Obvious sources are local newspapers, farm and cattleman newsletters and magazines, and websites. Hay brokers in your area are often listed in your local yellow pages. Other sources for hay that you may not be familiar with are described below:

KDA Website of Tested Hay Available for Sale - The Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) offers a hay testing service and a list of hay that is available for sale from Kentucky producers. Simply go to the website <http://www.kyagr.com/buyky/corral/haylistingpara.asp> to find hay sorted according to type of hay and county. Even if you are not purchasing, hay we encourage you to have your own hay tested by KDA by calling 1-800-248-4628.

KDA Hay Hotline - The Kentucky Department of Agriculture initiated a Hay Hotline in 2007 in response to drought conditions throughout the state and resulting hay shortages. The hotline can be accessed by calling 1-888-567-9589 or going to the website: <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/forage/HayForageDroughtRelief.htm>. The website contains a listing of "Hay for Sale" and a listing of those that "Need to Buy Hay". It also lists information on local hay auctions and out-of-state sources of hay.

University of Kentucky Forage Information - The University of Kentucky maintains a Forage Website containing a range of forage publications, upcoming events, and websites that contain more information. One of these websites lists Out-of-State sources of hay which takes you to the following links. If you cannot find hay in the state, then try one of these hay listings.

www.haybarn.com
www.hayexchange.com
www.bid4hay.com/index.php
www.nebraska-alfalfa.com (check under inventory)

www.hayforsale.net
www.nationalhay.org

(Source: Ray Smith and Tom Keene, University of Kentucky)

IF YOU PROCRASTINATE, IT MAY BE TOO LATE

During the National Hay Association Annual Convention last month, the underlying tone was that of short hay supplies and increasing prices.

Several areas of the country have experienced drought this year while other areas saw record rainfall and had trouble making hay. All of which leads to a hectic and uncertain winter feeding season.

In Kentucky we know first hand about the effect of drought. Most of the state is currently in an "extreme hydrological drought". That coupled with the early April freeze means that hay supplies for many producers are inadequate for the upcoming feeding season.

Anyone needing or wanting to purchase hay for their livestock feeding needs should not "wait to see what the market will do". National supplies are low (except for pockets of hay in states like Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas) and prices are on the rise.

Determine what your hay needs are going to be and try to lock in a supply right now rather than waiting. If you find hay that will work for your operation, visit with the producer or broker to insure that the hay will be available for your entire feeding period. However, be careful about "putting money down" or "up front" to hold the hay. If a grower or broker asks for up front money, make sure that you have some type of collateral or security that you will indeed receive the hay. On more than one occasion, up front money has been taken and the hay sold to someone else. Also, if you agree to take "X" number of bales or tons, make sure that you also honor your obligation by taking the hay.

Once you receive your hay, have it tested. When you receive the results, visit with your County Agent, nutritionist or veterinarian and formulate a ration that will allow you to maximize the utilization of that hay and insure that your livestock receive the necessary nutrition to make it through until spring. (Source: Tom Keene, UK Hay Marketing Specialist)

BUFFALO TRACE HAY AUCTION

A hay auction was held Thursday, October 18th at 1:00PM at the Buffalo Trace Produce Auction site in Lewisport, Kentucky.

A crowd of roughly 125 attended the auction where they bid on and purchased hay from Kansas and Oklahoma as well as local hay produced in the five county area. Cornstalks, soybean stubble and wheat straw were also auctioned. The bidding was lively and all of the products sold (although a lot or two were sold on the grounds after the actual sale). Prices varied from a low of \$2.78 per bale for small square bales of straw to \$245/ton for hay in large square bales. An educational program was held shortly before the auction to try and help farmers feed and utilize the hay they were about to buy in an economical and practical manner in order to stretch the hay as far as possible.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture was also on site testing the hay lots to be sold and also testing some local hay that was not for sale.

The auction was very successful and preliminary plans are to have another one next month (date yet to be determined).

(Source: Tom Keene, UK Hay Marketing Specialist)

VOLUNTEER CORN

We have never seen volunteer corn as thick or as tall at this time of the year. Dry conditions during harvest resulted in more shatter of grain and rain after harvest permitted rapid germination, emergence and growth. Many people were grazing by mid-October and several cut for hay before the rain. Although nitrates can be a problem, we have not seen many samples that were tested with high nitrates. It is academically possible for corn to contain Hydrocyanic (prussic) acid; however, we are not aware of any animal losses. We have also checked with extension and research personnel in Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Alabama and Georgia and none have seen prussic acid problems with growing corn. CAUTION!!! Our biggest concern is Johnsongrass in corn fields (edges of field, fence rows, drawing areas, etc.). Johnsongrass can be lethal from the prussic acid standpoint and is the biggest problem the first light non-killing frost. **Do not graze fields that contain Johnsongrass or any plants in the sorghum family for two (2) weeks following a frost.** Plants can be grazed 48 hours after a KILLING FREEZE, assuming the entire field (all plants) have been killed. Be sensitive to protected areas, tree lines, etc. **If in doubt, DON'T GRAZE.**

WINTER FEEDING WILL BE A CHALLENGE

This year has been one for the record books. The shortage of hay will cause this winter to be a real challenge for Kentucky cow-calf producers. However, this challenge can be met by careful planning now and avoiding bad decisions. I believe that two bad decisions are (1) paying too much for poor quality roughage, and (2) liquidating good cow herds that have been developed over years.

The present situation has producers scrambling to purchase anything that can be loosely described as "hay". Whenever roughage is costing as much as concentrate feeds (corn, soyhulls, etc.), you should question why you would buy the feed with less nutritive value.

Why would you pay \$60 (for example) for a roll of grass hay that may not weigh over 1,000 lbs. That would be about \$120/ton for a feed that has only about half the value of most concentrates. Low quality hay will need supplementation anyway. If the price of concentrate feeds keeps increasing, corn may become our most economical option as a supplemental feed. However, protein supplementation will be necessary.

We seem to think that we have to give the cows all the hay they will consume. But is this really true? Maybe we have enough hay and just need to supplement for best performance. How much hay must a cow really have? It is not 20 to 30 pounds daily but rather enough to keep their rumen healthy in other words about 5 to 10 lb. of long stem hay will do just fine. Ohio State University did a 3-year winter feeding trial in which they fed only 2 lb. of hay daily with no apparent ill effects, as long as it was supplemented properly. We can adjust to the hay shortage by limit feeding hay and spending our feed dollars on concentrates like energy and protein supplements.

Feeding cows 20-30 lb. of hay from CRP land or corn stalks will require supplementation to keep cows in decent body condition. This feed is especially low in protein. Feeding low protein diets (<10% crude protein) can result in weak calves at birth. Cows in poor body condition will also have less immunoglobulins in their colostrum (first) milk which makes their calves susceptible to diseases. Finally, cows which come out of the winter in poor body condition will not rebreed as well as those with a body condition score of 5.

Wintering costs will certainly be higher than usual this year. No matter what we choose to feed, we must balance the diet for energy, protein, minerals and vitamins. It's a matter of "pay now or pay later".

Some producers are even opting to liquidate their herds. This is a drastic decision in my opinion. It may be okay for someone considering retiring and getting out of the business. However, as a temporary solution, it overlooks several problems. The biggest of which is abandoning your genetic progress which was made over several years. It is not likely that you can go out next year and buy a good herd of cattle with no health and management concerns.

This may be a good time to do some "down-sizing" or "right-sizing" though. Cow prices are holding up so we should consider some culling which is a normal fall activity anyway. Your cow herd should be pregnancy tested so that open cows can be eliminated prior to winter feeding. Poor-producers, aged or unsound cows should also be culled. You can then focus on keeping the remaining "base cow herd" in good condition. Calculate the amount of feed that you need to purchase and make those purchases now. Don't wait until February to adjust. Feed will likely be higher at that time. Maybe we can come through these tough times with an even better herd. That can be our goal.

Finally, you don't need any "moralizing" from me but ... I don't think that we should be overcharging our neighbors for hay and feed just because the opportunity exists. Kentucky cattle producers need help and we can help our industry by working together to keep our feed costs as low as possible. We have a rich history of helping other states in time of need. It is now time to help ourselves. (SOURCE: Roy Burris, UK Extension Beef Specialist, Kentucky Beef Newsletter, October 2007)

STATE SUMMARY OF 2007

The April freeze plus the summer drought have resulted in alfalfa hay yields down 50% or more. Cool season grass hay yields were down 60 to 70% and pasture production was down 60 to 90%. Warm season pasture and hayfields fared better, but even the yield of drought tolerant native grasses was reduced in 2007. There were some bright spots around the state with needed rainfall in July and August, but these areas were few and far between and it seemed like the same areas received rainfall over and over and areas just a few miles away received none. A survey of hay needs by county agents in mid-September showed that 1.5 million tons of hay was needed for the 2007/2008 winter. And this huge need is compounded by a general shortage of hay across the country and record high prices. No doubt about it, this has been a tough growing season and this winter will not be an easy one for livestock producers in Kentucky.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF INCREASED ATMOSPHERIC CARBON DIOXIDE

CONCLUSIONS – There are no experimental data to support the hypothesis that increases in human hydrocarbon use or in atmospheric carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are causing or can be expected to cause unfavorable changes in global temperatures, weather, or landscape. There is no reason to limit human production of CO₂, CH₄, and other minor greenhouse gases as has been proposed.

We also need not worry about environmental calamities even if the current natural warming trend continues. The Earth has been much warmer during the past 3,000 years without catastrophic effects. Warmer weather extends growing seasons and generally improved the habitability of colder regions.

As coal, oil, and natural gas are used to feed and lift from poverty vast numbers of people across the globe, more CO₂ will be released into the atmosphere. This will help to maintain and improve the health, longevity, prosperity, and productivity of all people.

The United States and other countries need to produce more energy, not less. The most practical, economical, and environmentally sound methods available are hydrocarbon and nuclear technologies.

Human use of coal, oil, and natural gas has not harmfully warmed the Earth, and the extrapolation of current trends shows that it will not do so in the foreseeable future. The CO₂ produced does, however, accelerate the growth rates of plants and also permits plants to grow in drier regions. Animal life, which depends upon plants, also flourishes, and the diversity of plant and animal life is increased.

Human activities are producing part of the rise in CO₂ in the atmosphere. Mankind is moving the carbon in coal, oil, and natural gas from below ground to the atmosphere, where it is available for conversion into living things. We are living in an increasingly lush environment of plants and animals as a result of this CO₂ increase. Our children will therefore enjoy an Earth with far more plant and animal life than that with which we now are blessed. (SOURCE: Arthur B. Robinson, Noah E. Robinson and Willie Soon, Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine IN Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons, 2007, 12, 79-90)

UPCOMING EVENTS

JAN 7-8	Heart of America Grazing Conference, Columbia, MO
JAN 11	Forages at KCA, Lexington
JAN 26-FEB 1	SRM/AFGC Forage Conference, Louisville
FEB 21	28 th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City



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