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Forage News [2006-12]

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FORAGE NEWS

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

DECEMBER 2006

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

GRAZING CONFERENCE

Over 175 people from several states attended and participated in the 7th Kentucky Grazing Conference held November 21 at the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington. Participants heard University of Kentucky Specialist discuss cutting edge research and experiences on Grazing. Our keynote speaker was Mr. Ed Ballard from the University of Illinois. Ed discussed "New Options for Extending the Grazing Season". Proceedings from the meeting are now available on our Forage Website www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage look under KY Conference Proceedings & Awards. The afternoon featured two leading producers, Mr. Todd Clark and Mr. Chris Robey.

FEED: BIGGEST COST ITEM

Feed costs represent the major cost in most livestock production systems. A recently completed analysis of 225 Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) Beef Cow Records on herds in Illinois and Iowa showed that feed cost was the overriding factor determining profitability, explaining over 57 percent of the herd-to-herd variation.

Eight Financial Measures Capable of Explaining Over 82% of Variation in RLM in Beef Cow Enterprise

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	R2
Feed Cost	.567
Depreciation Cost	.086
Operating Cost	.049
Calf Weight	.046
Capital Charge	.024
Calf Price	.027
Weaning Percentage	.017
Herd Size	.007
Total	.823

A. Miller, R. Knipe, University of Illinois SPA, 2004

(SOURCE: Ed Ballard, Animal Science Educator, University of Illinois (Retired) in Kentucky Grazing Conference Proceedings, KFGC-06-04, November 2006)

HEART OF AMERICA GRAZING CONFERENCE

The HOAGC will be held January 24-25 at the Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Details on the program, lodging and registration are available at http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/HOAGC and on our Forage Website at www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage or by calling Conference Co-Chair Justin Sexten at 618-242-9310.

KFGC PRESENTS ANNUAL AWARDS

The Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council presented their 2006 Awards at the Kentucky Grazing Conference in Lexington November 21. Awards presented were:

Grassroots – Bill Payne
Industry – Buddy Rowlett
Public (County) – George Kelley
Public (State) – Mike Barrett

Congratulations Bill, Buddy, George & Mike.

KFGC INSTALLS NEW OFFICERS

KFGC Officers elected at the Board Meeting November 20 in Lexington were:

President – Phil Howell
Vice President – Don Sorrell
Secretary – Ray Smith
Treasurer – Tom Keene
Adviser – Garry Lacefield

Our thanks to outgoing President, Dan Grigson, for his dedicated service and leadership during the past two years.

FAYETTE COUNTY PRODUCER BECOMES FORAGE SPOKESPERSON

Mr. Todd Clark was the winner in the KFGC Forage Spokesperson Contest held November 21 at the Kentucky Grazing Conference.

Todd Clark is a tobacco, beef and forage producer in Fayette County. His primary operation is based on his 72 acre farm on Georgetown Road. At his personal farm, Todd has incorporated intensive grazing into his management technique in order to optimize space and profits. Along with two other farms that he leases, Todd backgrounds 285 feeder calves per year on 150 acres. The animals come onto the farm weighing 450 lbs. and will leave at 850 lbs. Todd utilizes an alfalfa/orchardgrass mix along with endophyte-free fescue and red clover among other forage types. In addition to the rotational grazing, Todd feeds the calves approximately 200 round bales of alfalfa/grass haylage. Todd also markets 15,000 small square bales of alfalfa/orchardgrass, 5,000 small square bales of alfalfa/timothy, and 10,000 bales of mixed grass hay in small square bales to small horse farms in the area. Todd also custom bales approximately 15,000 small square bales that are used for bedding at local thoroughbred farms. In total, Todd manages approximately 700 acres of forage in Fayette and neighboring counties.

Todd will represent Kentucky at the American Forage & Grassland Council's Forage Spokesperson Contest in Pennsylvania in June 2007.

Congratulations Todd and good luck in Pennsylvania.

Kentucky Hay – 2006

All hay production was forecast at 5.98 million tons, down 9 percent from the August estimate while up 3 percent from the 2005 crop. Alfalfa hay was forecast at 1.03 million tons, up 12 percent from August and 23 percent from a year earlier. Yield was estimated at 3.8 tons per acre, up 0.4 tons from August and 0.6 tons from 2005. A moderate summer with adequate moisture increased yield per acre and permitted more alfalfa cuttings per acre. Other hay production was forecast at 4.95 million tons, down 12 percent from August while virtually unchanged from a year earlier. Yield was estimated at 2.2 tons, down 0.3 tons from August while up 0.1 ton from a year earlier. Reduced production resulted partially from farmers who chose to graze their cattle on other hay acreage rather than cut it for hay. (SORUCE: Kentucky Agri-News, Vol. No. 25, Issue No. 20, Oct. 13, 2006)

Methods to Manage Soil Phosphorus Levels on Kentucky Poultry Farms

With rising commercial fertilizer costs more farmers are turning to alternative ways to provide the needed nutrients in their crop fields. With the growth of the poultry industry in KY we must pay close attention to the P soil test level. The extensive growth in poultry production has led to an obvious increase in availability of poultry litter. Commercial fertilizer costs have increased nearly 50% or $103 over a 4 year span. As fertilizer costs increase consideration by farmers to use higher rates of poultry litter increases. Soil P levels could possibly increase from greater use of poultry litter as fertilizer. Timing of application, plant type; using grass or legume as forage, stage of maturity at harvest, and fertilizer changes were evaluated as means to reduce soil P levels. Neither timing nor split application affected P uptake when soil test levels were already high at the site. A high percentage of removable P was found to be located in the stems and runners of plants thus more P was removed in the harvest of more upright growing plants. Plant P concentration increased with plant maturity. It was also determined that soil test P levels could be reduced by using commercial fertilizer for the N source and limiting the amount of litter applied to less than the plant P removal rate. Phosphorus removal is directly based on plant yield so anything done to increase yield without adding P should decrease the potential problem of high soil P levels. *(J.M. Johnson, et al., Western Kentucky University, IN AFGC Proceedings 2006)*

Meat Goat Performance and Carcass Parameters When Finished on Orchardgrass, Red Clover, or Alfalfa Pastures

The meat goat industry is growing rapidly in the U.S., particularly on small farms. Meat goat production in the U.S. almost extensively uses the Boer breed to take advantage of their meat-type conformation and heterosis derived from crossbreeding. There are a diversity of forage types and qualities used in meat goat production systems. Nutrient intake from low- to medium-quality grass hays may be insufficient to maximize growth potential for Boer and Boer-cross goats. This was the first year of a 3-yr study to evaluate weight gain and carcass parameters when finishing meat goats on pasture without grain supplementation. In our study, goat wethers grazing red clover and alfalfa had heavier final body weights and gains than those grazing orchardgrass. Goats finished on alfalfa, red clover, or orchardgrass pastures produced desirable final body weights and carcasses for the Muslim Halal ethnic market. *(SOURCE: K.E. Turner, et al, West Virginia University, IN AFGC Proceedings 2006)*

The Case for Forage Legumes

Legumes have long been viewed as special and beneficial pasture plants, but there is justifiably heightened interest in them at present, thus the reasons for growing them deserve renewed emphasis. Nitrogen Fixation: When in association with the proper type of bacteria, most legumes can obtain nitrogen from the atmosphere and "fix" it in nodules on the roots. Nitrogen fixation/acre/year by a stand of annual legume(s), white clover or red clover, and alfalfa often is within the ranges of 50 to 150, 75 to 200, and 150 to 200, respectively. Forage quality: As compared to grasses, legumes are usually higher in crude protein, digestibility, and minerals and vitamins. The result is better performance of grazing animals in terms of higher gains, milk production, and reproductive rates. Distribution of Growth: Introducing legumes into grass pastures often extends the grazing season. Red clover is especially likely to provide additional summer production when grown with cool season perennial grasses. Several legumes can extend the grazing season when grown with annual grasses. Forage Yield: Yield per acre from a grass/legume mixture is often higher than from grass alone, especially if little or no nitrogen fertilizer is applied. Crop Rotation Benefits: Legumes provide N for succeeding crops, improve soil tilth, and may create root channels that benefit subsequent crops. Reduced Animal Toxicities: Growing legumes with toxic endophyte tall fescue can reduce fescue toxicity symptoms and improve animal performance. Legumes also contain more magnesium (Mg) than grasses and thus can reduce the likelihood of grass tetany, the underlying cause of which is Mg deficiency. Environmental Acceptability: Legumes provide slow release nitrogen, which is more environmentally friendly than commercial nitrogen. They also furnish pollen and nectar for bees, tend to increase populations of beneficial predatory insects, and are a preferred food of many wild animals. Profit: Forage legumes have the potential of simultaneously improving animal performance and lowering costs. Keys to success with successfully introducing and using legumes include selecting the proper legume for a particular site and situation, providing soil amendments as needed, and providing management that minimizes grass competition. *(SOURCE: Dr. Don Ball, Dept. of Agronomy and Soils, Auburn University, Auburn, AL)*

Upcoming Events

DEC 10-13	Third National Conference on Grazing Lands, St. Louis, MO
2007	
JAN 11-13	KCA Annual Convention & Trade Show, Lexington
JAN 24-25	Heart of America Grazing Conference, Mt. Vernon, IL
FEB 22	27th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City
JUN 24-27	American Forage & Grassland Council Annual Meeting, State College, PA
JUL 26	UK All Commodity Field Day, UKREC, Princeton
2008	
JAN 26-FEB 1	SRM/AFGC Forage Conference, Louisville

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