HOW I USE MY PASTURES

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Mr. Cowpie’s Party Animals
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Mr. Cowpie’s Party Animal is a small agriculture-entertainment business owned by Doug and Joan Gehner of California, Kentucky. Our business is a mobile petting zoo that incorporates singing and storytelling into an entertaining yet very educational program for children and adults. Our “party” animals consist of horses, goats, chickens, rabbits and many other traditional and non-traditional farm animals. They are a major source of our family income.

Prior to 2005, hay and grain were being fed daily to the farm animals even during the summer months because our tall fescue pasture was of such poor quality. After a call to the Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service and a farm visit by the Agriculture Extension agent, a pasture renovation program was developed. The first and possibly the most important part of this program was to soil test the pasture. The soil test results indicated that the soil pH was very good at 7.1 but phosphorus and potash were low. During the spring of 2005 the pasture was fertilized and certified varieties of red /ladino clover and orchardgrass were frost seeded. Both boundary and temporary electric fencing was constructed to allow for the implementation of a rotational grazing system. A six acre pasture field was divided into five paddocks.

The results of our work were amazing. We were fortunate to get an excellent stand of legumes established that not only improved our forage quality but also supplied the nitrogen needed for additional growth. Even during the drought of 2005 we had an abundance of high quality forages for our six horses and other farm animals. Due to the improved pastures we have purchased and fed very little hay and grain to the animals. We anticipate having adequate pasture for the animals until mid to late January of 2006. Not only has the pasture improvements reduced our feeding expenses but it has also reduced some erosion and overgrazing problems that we were experiencing. The animals have been extremely healthy and are actually becoming a little too fat on the improved pasture. The knowledge that we have gained from implementing the pasture renovation program will allow us to manage our pasture in a more productive and profitable way.