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Forage News [2006-09]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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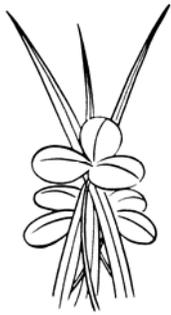


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FORAGE NEWS

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

SEPTEMBER 2006

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

FORAGE FIELD DAY

The Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council Field Day will be held on September 12, 2006 at the Shady Meadows Farm (Gene and Marcy Dobbs) in Campbell County, KY. The theme for this year's field day is "Maximizing Farm Productivity and Profitability by Implementing Sound Grazing, Livestock and Conservation Practices." The field day will begin at 4:00 p.m. with a short welcome and farm overview followed by three farm tour stops from 4:15 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. From 5:45 to 6:30 you will enjoy a "sirloin burger" meal cooked and served by the Campbell County Cattle Association. After dinner the field day will continue with 3 more tour stops from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Tour stops will include:

Topic	Speaker
1. Renovating Pastures with Legumes	Dr. Ray Smith
2. Fencing and Watering Options for Rotational Grazing	Mr. Kevin Laurent
3. Extending the Grazing System Using Stockpiled Fescue and Alternative Forages	Mr. Don Sorrell
4. Managing a Rotational Grazing System	Dr. Garry Lacefield
5. Beef Cattle Management Practices that Work	Mr. Gene Dobbs
6. Conservation Practices at Shady Meadows Farm	Mr. Ed Thompson

This field day will also feature the following demonstrations/plots: Max Q fescue/clover, fencing and watering, pasture renovation options and nitrogen sources/rates for stockpiling fescue. The KY Department of Agriculture's mobile hay testing lab will be on hand to test hay samples at no charge.

For more details and a map to the farm, see our website www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage

STOCKPILE PRODUCTION : DOES IT PAY TO FERTILIZE IN FALL GIVEN THE HIGH COST OF NITROGEN FERTILIZER?

It is that time of year when we need to start thinking about growing stockpile for winter feeding. However, I must admit that stockpile production is not for everyone. For example, producers that are stocked sufficiently might not have the pasture resources available in order to produce stockpile during the late summer and early fall months, and in many situations cattle may need to be placed in a dry lot situation in order to produce stockpile. In a case like this stockpile production may not be the wisest use of your resources. However, for the majority of cow/calf producers stockpile production is feasible and will help reduce winter feed costs.

I have received many calls over the spring and summer from individuals that have questioned the use of chemical nitrogen sources because of the increased cost of these products. The question they raise deserves further discussion, and can be addressed by answering how much additional forage can be produce per pound on N applied. The response of applied N is fairly linear in the range of 0 to 100 pounds of applied N per acre. Using data from experiments conducted on the Center over the past several years, we have determined that for each 50 pounds of N applied in early August we can expect

approximately 1250 pounds of stockpile production. By coincidence, unfertilized tall fescue also produces approximately 1250 pounds of stockpile. Fifty pounds of N as ammonium nitrate is currently running about \$23 (\$0.46/ pound of N). If you can purchase hay at \$50 per ton and it costs you another \$5 per bale to get it to the farm (the average in our area is nearly \$10/bale for freight) then the real cost of hay delivered to the farm is \$36.25 per bale (\$41.25 per bale if your freight is \$10 per bale). Additional costs for hay would also include the need for a tractor or truck to move bales at feeding time. The bottom line is that fertilizing for stockpile production is still less expensive than hay feeding. (SOURCE: Dave Davis, *Missouri Forage Systems Update*, July-September 2006, Vol. 15, No. 3)

CAN YOU SUCCESSFULLY "THICKEN-UP" OLD ALFALFA STANDS?

University and private alfalfa researchers do not recommend the practice of interseeding new alfalfa into old, thin alfalfa stands ("thickening-up"). However, we continue to receive many inquiries on this practice year after year, and always give the same answer: **Don't do it!** There are very few situations where a grower has any chance of success when thickening-up an old alfalfa stand, and although we'd love to sell you the seed, we also have a vested interest in keeping our grower-customers profitable! Let's review why the odds are strongly against success when alfalfa growers attempt to thicken-up old stands.

What kills new seedlings in established alfalfa stands? The environment surrounding a germinating alfalfa seed in an old, established alfalfa stand is as hostile as one could imagine. Diseases, insects, and nematodes specific to alfalfa have had years to build up in the soil and in the root and crown tissue of older plants. As soon as young, fresh tissue is available (the germinating alfalfa seedling), these pathogens attack, and the new seedlings "melt" away within a few months of seeding.

Another reason why young alfalfa seedlings seem to melt away after interseeding is the presence of competition from old alfalfa plants. This competition takes on two forms: competition for light, water, and nutrients; and autotoxicity. Even very thin older stands provide stiff competition for light and water as new seedlings attempt to establish. In addition, the older plants will excrete compounds from their roots and top growth which are autotoxic to the germination and growth of new alfalfa seedlings.

What should a grower do? For producers with thin alfalfa stands, the best advice is to destroy the stand (plow or herbicide) and rotate to a different crop for at least one year. This allows pest pressures and autotoxic compounds in the soil to dissipate completely before new alfalfa seedlings attempt to establish. Although the practice of thickening-up old alfalfa stands looks attractive on paper (lower seedbed preparation costs and lower seed costs (e.g. 8-10 lbs/acre vs. 18-20 lbs/acre)), it is not cost effective. Thickened-up stands will quickly revert to their thin, run-out condition, and become weedy and unproductive. Your best bet is to plow the old stand, take the nitrogen credit and rotation benefit on a subsequent cereal crop, and establish new alfalfa acres on ground that's been out of alfalfa for at least one year. (SOURCE: *The Haymaker Newsletter*, Spring 2006)

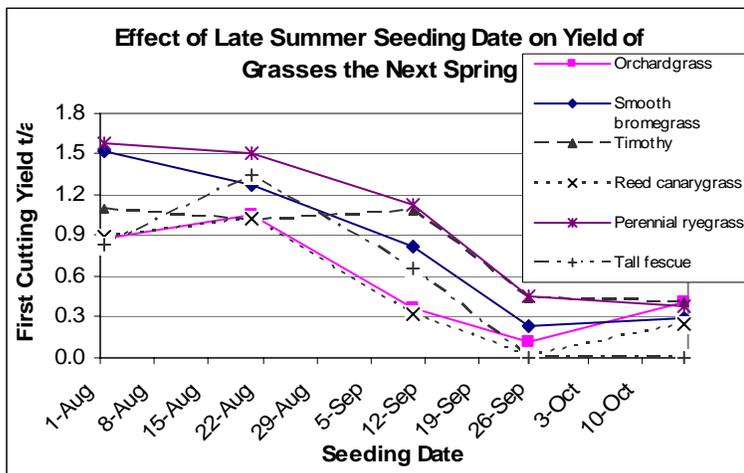
FALL SEEDING GRASSES

Late-summer/fall establishment of grass is often desired in the Midwest. Most farmers do not realize how much fall seeding date affects the yield of the grasses the next year. We seeded six forage grasses at several late summer dates at three sites in Wisconsin (River Falls, Arlington, and Lancaster) over three years. Seeding dates were spaced approximately every 2 to 3 weeks from late about August 1 to late November 1. Species included orchardgrass, smooth bromegrass, timothy, reed canarygrass, perennial ryegrass, and tall fescue.

All of the grasses seeded by mid- to late-September produced stands with visible plants by killing frost most years and that usually survived the winter. Later seedings did not produce visible plants until spring, if at all. Slow establishing species, particularly reed canarygrass, produced better stands when seeded by early September. Timothy tended to be the most variable with regard to seeding date and next year yield. In only one trial out of nine did a November seeding, where the seed lay dormant over winter, produce a stand the next spring.

The most important finding is that earlier seeding dates (early through mid August) usually had more tillers per square foot, more tillers per plant, and higher dry matter yield the following season. As shown, in the figure, average first cutting yields of grasses the spring after late summer seeding, when harvested at the boot stage, ranged from 1.5 t/a for some grasses down to less than 0.5 t/a on first cutting depending on when they were sown the previous fall. By later cuttings the stands had recovered and all yielded well. However, delaying late summer seeding from mid August to mid September generally resulted in 1 ton/acre less yield the next year.

This study clearly shows that delaying grass seeding in the late summer or early fall not only increases the risk of establishment failure but reduces yield of the stand the next year. Therefore we recommend seeding grasses as early as possible during the month of August. (SOURCE: Dan Undersander, University of Wisconsin)



WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES...

This time last year everyone was concerned about the drought and lots of people were already feeding stored feeds to supplement little or no pasture. Everyone was also wondering if they were going to have enough hay to get through the winter and onto new grass in late March and early April. Well, what a difference a year makes!!

We have had a good hay making year so far with another cutting possible before November and I have not heard about having to feed hay to supplement pasture this year. These bode well for having good hay inventories for feeding livestock this winter. And barring a terrible winter with lots of snow cover, Kentucky producers should get through until spring with plentiful feed.

However, a lot of the Midwest and South has been extremely dry this summer and will be needing lots of hay to feed their livestock this winter. If Kentucky producers have excess hay, they may want to consider trying to sell some hay to livestock owners who need the feed.

A good way for producers to determine if they will have extra hay for sell is to have their hay tested for a nutritional analysis by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). KDA will come to your farm and test your hay for \$10.00 per lot. They can be reached at 1-800-248-4628 for further information. Once producers get their test results back they can then get with their county agent and balance a ration for their winter feeding needs. Then do the math....total tons of hay in storage minus total tons of hay needed for winter feeding then market the extra. The excess can then be marketed and add some

additional income for the farm can be added to the "bottom line". (SOURCE: Tom Keene, UK Hay Marketing Specialist)

MONITOR WET HAY TO PREVENT FIRE

Hay fires are a danger anytime small bales are stacked at 20% moisture or higher, or big bales at more than 16% moisture, warn Cornell University safety experts. They say the quickest way to detect hot hay is to drive a long pipe or rod into the center of the stack. Leave it in for 20 minutes and pull it out. If it's too hot to hold in your hand, the hot hay should be removed immediately.

If you think you have a problem, monitor the stack temperature with a homemade probe. Take a 10' piece of 3/4" diameter steel pipe and drill eight holes about 3" from one end. Hammer that end together to form a sharp edge, drive the pipe into the stack and lower a thermometer to the end. Retrieve it after 10-15 minutes.

Check the temperature daily if it's above 120 degrees; twice a day if it's 140-150 degrees, say the experts. At 150 degrees, the hay is entering the danger zone; check the temperature every two hours. If it's between 150-160 degrees, start moving hay out of the stack. At 160 degrees or higher, call the fire department. Have firemen on site before moving any hay. (SOURCE: Hay Grower's Notebook, August 2006)

FORAGE SPOKESMAN NOMINATIONS

The Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council is now accepting nominations for the Forage Spokesman Contest to be held during the 7th Kentucky Grazing Conference in Lexington on November 21, 2006. Mr. Bill Payne from Lincoln County is our reigning Kentucky winner and also the national AFGC Forage Spokesman. Kentucky has more National Forage Spokesman winners than any other state.

If you would like to nominate a producer who has an outstanding forage program and who would be willing to share his/her experiences, please send a one-page nomination to Dr. Ray Smith, Plant & Soil Science Dept., 105 Plant Science Bldg., 1405 Veterans Road, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0312 or e-mail at raysmith1@uky.edu on or before November 1, 2006. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

RAKE DESIGN DOESN'T IMPACT HAY QUALITY

The type of rake you use to windrow hay doesn't have much effect on its drying rate or quality. That's according to an Ohio State University study. The researchers compared bar, rotary and wheel rakes on an alfalfa-orchardgrass mixture and on pure alfalfa. Samples were taken prior to raking and 24 hours after round baling.

The raking and baling process lowered crude protein by 5% and raised NDF by 6.4%. But rake design had no significant effect on the dry matter content, crude protein or NDF or either type of hay. (SOURCE: Hay Grower's Notebook, August 2006)

KFGC AWARDS NOMINATIONS

Nominations are now being accepted for all KFGC Awards including: Producer, Industry and Public (State and County). The awards will be presented at the 7th Kentucky Grazing Conference in Lexington on November 21, 2006. A list of previous award winners is available at www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage go directly to KFGC Award History.

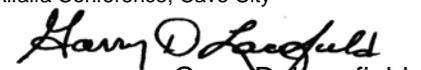
If you want to nominate a deserving individual, send a one page nomination to Garry Lacefield, Research & Education Center, P.O. Box 469, Princeton, KY 42445 or by e-mail to glacefe@uky.edu. Nomination deadline is October 1, 2006.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEP 12 KFGC Field Day, Dobbs Shady Meadow Farm, Campbell County
 SEP 28 UK College of Ag Field Day, Robinson Station
 NOV 21 Kentucky Grazing Conference, Lexington
 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


 Garry D. Lacefield
 Extension Forage Specialist
 September 2006