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## Forage News [2006-04]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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# FORAGE NEWS

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

**APRIL 2006**

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

## **27<sup>TH</sup> KENTUCKY ALFALFA CONFERENCE DATE SET**

The 27<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference will be February 22, 2007 at the Cave City Convention Center.

## **7<sup>TH</sup> KENTUCKY GRAZING CONFERENCE DATE SET**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Grazing Conference will be November 21, 2006 at the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington.

## **HEART OF AMERICA GRAZING CONFERENCE IN ILLINOIS**

The Heart of America Grazing Conference will be January 24-25, 2007 at the Holiday Inn in Mount Vernon, Illinois.

## **PROCEEDINGS AVAILABLE ON-LINE**

Proceedings from the Heart of America Grazing Conference and the 26<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference are now available on our Forage Website [www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage)

## **KFGC FORAGE FIELD DAY**

The 2006 KY Forage and Grassland Field Day is scheduled for September 12, 2006 from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Dobbs Shady Meadow Farm located in Campbell County. Gene and Marcy Dobbs raise and sell commercial replacement heifers. The focus of this field day will be on pasture management with an emphasis on rotational grazing. Registration will begin at 3:30 p.m. Program topics/tour stops will include: benefits of a rotational grazing system, establishing a rotational grazing system on your farm, renovating pastures with legumes, fencing and watering options, extending the grazing season, pasture utilization/when to move cattle and an overview of the conservation practices and the livestock operation at Dobbs Shady Meadows Farm. The farm is located ¼ mile off AA Highway in southern Campbell County. More details in future issues of Forage News. (*Don Sorrell, Campbell County Extension Agent for Agriculture & Natural Resources*)

## **KENTUCKY PRODUCER WINS 1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE AT AFGC HAY SHOW**

Rick Alexander, a producer from Mason County, Kentucky, won 1st Place in the Hay Show last week in San Antonio, Texas at the AFGC Convention. Rick placed first in Class XII, Alfalfa Hay- 2nd or later cutting. Congratulations, Rick!

## **UK ROBINSON STATION TO HOST COLLEGE OF AG FIELD DAY**

On September 28, 2006, the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture will be hosting their All Commodity Field Day at the Robinson Station located in Quicksand, Kentucky. Registration will begin at 9:00 a.m. for the following workshops that conclude at 2:30 p.m.:

- Managing Steep Terrain for Year-Round Grazing in KY
- Basic Horse Management
- Introduction to Goat Production
- Fall Decorations and Ornamentals
- Fall Crops for Farmer Markets
- Introduction to GPS

The afternoon program will consist of wagon tours of ongoing field research and a wide variety of demonstrations and displays for adults and youth. For more information please check out the Robinson Station website at: [www.ca.uky.edu/robinsonstation](http://www.ca.uky.edu/robinsonstation) or contact Dr. David Ditsch at 606-666-2438 Ext. 231.

## **KENTUCKY REAPS AWARDS AT AFGC MEETING**

Kentucky was well represented at the American Forage and Grassland Council annual meeting awards banquet in San Antonio, Texas on March 13. Russell Hackley, Grayson County, was presented with the AFGC Lifetime Member Award. Bill Payne, Lincoln County, won 1st place in the Forage Spokesperson Competition for an excellent presentation on his farm and an overview of his successful dairy heifer raising operation. Dennis Hancock, a PhD student with Dr. Chuck Dougherty at UK, won 1st place in the Young Scientists Competition for his presentation on remote sensing to predict alfalfa yield. Bill Talley of Princeton became AFGC President replacing fellow Kentuckian Ken Johnson from Tompkinsville. Dr. Ray Smith, at UK, finished his 3 year term on the board, but will continue as AFGC secretary. Phil Howell and Russell Hackley are also current AFGC board members. Congratulations to all award winners and AFGC officers.

## **WKU STUDENTS PLAY PROMINENT ROLE AT AFGC MEETING**

Eight students from WKU were a part of a strong Kentucky contingency at the American Forage and Grassland Council meeting in San Antonio, March 10-14. Undergraduate students, Jay Campbell, Chris Kenner, Adam Massey, Susan Priddy, and Brandon Griffith participated in the Grassland Evaluation contest and the Forage Quiz Bowl. Graduate

students Jennifer Johnson, Matt Futrell and Philip Price were also in attendance and helped with the preparation of the teams. This is the third year since the inception of the Forage Bowl and WKU has had students compete every year. In the two years since the Grassland Evaluation contest has been in place, WKU has competed both years. Jennifer Johnson gave a presentation entitled "Methods to Manage Soil Phosphorus Levels on Kentucky Poultry Farms". Accompanying the students were Dr. Byron Sleugh and Dr. David Stiles, WKU Agriculture faculty, and David Newsom, Assistant Manager of the WKU Agriculture Research and Education Complex. Dr. Sleugh also had a poster presentation entitled "Reducing Broiler Litter Application Rates Can Still Produce High Yield and Quality in Sorghum-Sudangrass". This was the only group of students at the AFGC meeting and organizers are still working hard at getting more schools and more states to bring students to the meetings. The WKU students' attendance was made possible by assistance from the WKU Applied Research and Technology Program, KFGC, and WKU's Ogden College of Science and Engineering Dean's Office.

The learning experience for these students was amazing and they are committed to continue to support KFGC and AFGC. (Byron Sleugh, WKU Dept. of Agriculture)

### ROOTING DEPTH OF ALFALFA

Root penetrating power of alfalfa is equaled only by the desert sagebrush of the western plains. Under favorable conditions of soil and climate roots will penetrate to a depth of five feet in six months. Many instances are recorded of roots having been dug or otherwise exposed, having length and penetration exceeding sixty feet. Mr. C.W. Irish, USDA Chief of "Irrigation Injury" had opportunity to observe alfalfa rooting depth in the early 1900s while making a survey of a mining tunnel in Nevada. The tunnel was driven into a rock known to miners as 'rotten porphyry'. It was much shattered and seamed, and through the crevices in the rock in the roof of the tunnel water came out drop by drop; through the same crevices came roots of plants which were found to be alfalfa, growing from an old field over the tunnel through a depth of soil and rock of 129 feet. While extreme examples of alfalfa root penetration are uncommon in literature, penetration of active roots to a depth of 4 to 12 feet are common. (SOURCE: G.D. Lacefield, Ph.D. Thesis, 1974)

### ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF GRASS AND CORN BASED PRODUCTION SYSTEMS ON A MARYLAND BEEF FARM

Major constraints or challenges to the long-term sustainability of livestock operations are profitability and environmental impact. Governmental guidelines and regulations related to nutrient management are encouraging, and in some cases forcing, producers to consider management changes to meet these concerns. Pasture and cropping practices have an important role in farm management with both economic and environmental implications. Grazed and harvested grass forages provide a major feed source in beef production. Corn harvested as either silage or grain is also a major feed due to the higher forage yields and the greater feed energy obtained. When considering cropping changes, producers and those advising producers must consider the impacts occurring throughout the farm and between the farm and its environment. This requires the integration of considerable information. Whole-farm simulation provides a tool that can assist in this type of comprehensive assessment by considering all the major components, the most important interactions among these components, and their impacts on farm performance, profitability, and the environment. A simulation study was done to compare the long-term environmental and economic benefits of perennial grass and corn based beef production systems in the mid Atlantic region. Simulation of an Angus cattle producing farm in northeastern

Maryland illustrated that the conversion of the farm from a corn and permanent pasture system to all perennial grassland with more intensive rotational grazing has provided both environmental and economic benefits. Nitrogen and phosphorus losses from the farm were reduced along with a \$15,000 increase in annual farm profit. These potential benefits should encourage more producers and those advising producers in the northeast and mid Atlantic regions to consider greater use of grass in beef production systems where corn currently has a major role. (Paul Crosson, et al IN Interpretive Summaries of the 2006 Proceedings of the AFGC Annual Conference, Vol. 15, p. 4)

### THE ECONOMICS OF ORGANIC AND GRAZING DAIRY FARMS

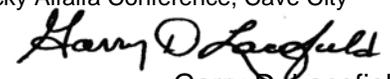
Management Intensive Rotational Grazing (MIRG) has become a more common dairy system in the northern U. S. This analysis of actual farm financial data from over two hundred graziers in the Great Lakes region provides some insight into the economics of grazing as a dairy system in the northern U.S.: 1. There is a range of profitability amongst graziers. 2. The average grazing herd with less than 100 cows had a higher unit profit per cow and hundredweight equivalent (CWT EQ) than the average grazing herd with more than 100 cows. Much of the difference was accounted for by the cost of paid labor. 3. The seasonal calving strategy (all cows dry simultaneously each calendar year), is more difficult to manage. 4. The graziers in the study were economically competitive with confinement herds in the states that had comparable data from both groups. 5. Grazing Holstein herds performed as well or better financially than herds of other breeds and breed combinations. 6. A number of organic farms are economically competitive although the sample size is small. The above conclusions are derived from a report of USDA Integrated Food and Agricultural Systems grant project #00-52501-9708. This report is available at the following web site <http://cdp.wisc.edu/>. (SOURCE: T.S. Kriegl, et al, IN Interpretive Summaries of the 2006 Proceedings of the AFGC Annual Conference, Vol. 15, p. 6)

### REMINDER - DON'T FORGET!!!

We have already received several forms from those who would like to remaining on our list to receive Forage News through the mail. If you would like to continue receiving Forage News through the mail and have not returned the form which was included in the March issue of Forage News, please fill out the form and send it as soon as possible. **Beginning with the June issue**, we will send it only to those who have returned the form. If you would like to receive Forage News electronically, please send an e-mail message to Christi at [cforsyth@uky.edu](mailto:cforsyth@uky.edu) with the words "Forage News" in the subject line. If you are currently receiving Forage News electronically, you will continue to receive it unless you tell us otherwise.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| JUN 15      | Beef/Forage Field Day, UK Woodford County Farm, Versailles |
| 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                     |
| <b>2007</b> |  |
| JAN 24-25   | Heart of America Grazing Conference, Mount Vernon, IL      |
| FEB 22      | 27 <sup>th</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City    |



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April 2006