



3-1-2006

Forage News [2006-03]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, "Forage News [2006-03]" (2006). *Forage News*. 144.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/forage_news/144

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FORAGE NEWS

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

MARCH 2006

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

26TH KENTUCKY ALFALFA CONFERENCE

Over 150 people from throughout Kentucky and eight other states attended the 26th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference in Lexington on February 23. Participants heard presentations from 14 speakers addressing timely topics on alfalfa establishment, production, and marketing.

ALFALFA AWARD RECIPIENTS HONORED

Alfalfa Awards were presented to three outstanding individuals at the 26th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference held in Lexington on February 23. The Charlie Schnitzler Producer Award went to Mr. George Eckler. Mr. Scott Cooper received the Warren Thompson Industry Award and Dr. Laurie Lawrence was selected as the 2006 recipient of the Garry Lacefield Public Service Award. Congratulations George, Scott and Laurie!

IMPROVED ALFALFA VARIETIES

Rather than list the more than 300 alfalfa varieties that are now available for sale in the U.S. and the attributes possessed by each one, the following is a brief overview covering some of the traits present in new varieties. Since the development and recent release of Round Ready® varieties has been discussed in previous issues of Forage News I will focus on other varieties.

Standfast™ is the trademarked name for a new group of alfalfa varieties that have been developed for lodging resistance and faster regrowth. These varieties will be useful where good soils promote lush growth/lodging problems and faster regrowth will allow cutting at shorter intervals. There are a number of new varieties with resistance to the potato leafhopper and these are much better than the first leafhopper resistant releases. They show high levels of resistance, have good yield potential, and have good resistance to a broad range of disease and insect pests. Hybrid alfalfa continues to make inroads with several new varieties. Although higher yields are not always present, hybrids have been shown to provide good yield stability over years and locations. Grazing tolerance continues to be a useful trait for many producers, but the release of new varieties may slow down a bit due to the merger of two major companies. Almost all new varieties will have good resistance to multiple pests, but it still pays

to look closely at the profile of any new variety before purchasing.

Check out the University of Kentucky Forage Website (www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage) for more information on variety choices. If you are in Kentucky or a neighboring region simply go to the Forage home page and click on "Forage Variety Trials". If you want to review information from a surrounding state, then go to the home page and click on "Forage Variety Trials: Other States".

KENTUCKY FORAGE & GRASSLAND COUNCIL AWARDS FOR 2006

Mr. Paul Beauchamp and Mr. Ova Alexander were the recipients of the KFGC Grassroots Award. Dr. Byron Sleugh received the State Public Award and Mr. Rankin Powell received the County Public Service Award. The Industry Award went to Mr. Bret Winsett. Congratulations Paul, Ova, Byron, Rankin and Bret!

HOW ARE PASTURE QUALITY, SOIL QUALITY, AND SOIL ORGANIC CARBON CONTENT LINKED? LESSONS FROM SOUTH CENTRAL IOWA

Pasture and grassland sites are typically managed based on the most economically feasible option. The attention to environmental quality is generally limited although most recognize the soil quality is an important factor in the long term effectiveness of their enterprise. In this presentation, we look at a different approach to maximize the production potential of a site. In south-central Iowa, pastures and grasslands make up about 40 percent of the landscape due to the highly dissected landscapes and clayey soils of the area. This makes traditional row cropping difficult. Pastures, because of their constant cover and economic viability, make them an appealing option for this area. This research examines six pastures in south-central Iowa. They were chosen for their similarities in soil series and landscape positions. Pasture quality ranged from high to low, based on standard NRCS protocol for determining pasture quality. An average of 10 soil samples to a 40 inch depth was taken from each pasture. Each soil sample was analyzed for a select set of soil properties. The results showed a strong link between pasture quality, soil

quality, and soil organic carbon. High quality pastures had the best soil quality and the most soil organic carbon. The results indicate management of pastures consistent with NRCS pasture quality guidelines has the potential to enhance environmental quality and amount of soil organic carbon sequestered. (SOURCE: J.M. McLaughlin, C.L. Burras, and S.A. Wills IN Forage Progress, Vol. 4, January 2006)

COMMON RED CLOVER

Are you a gambler? Do you feel lucky? If so, you might consider saving some money when buying red clover seed. In table 1, I have listed yields from 18 common red clover varieties that were available in the marketplace across Kentucky in 2002. As you can see, the yields ranged from 11.33 tons per acre for Common F to 4.70 T/A for Common K. The only way I knew the difference was to grow them and measure yield. The difference in yield between Common K and Common F was 6.63 T/A over the three years. If I valued this yield at only \$60.00 per ton then that is \$398 return. Now, my big problem that would require gambling skills better than mine and a whole bunch of luck would be to go find that Common that I knew would yield 6 tons more than another Common when all I know is they are both Common.

Variety	3-yr Total Yield (T/A)
Common F	11.33
Common H	10.28
Common D	10.22
Common I	9.45
Common L	9.05
Common G	8.82
Common J	6.91
Common M	6.37
Common P	6.30
Common B	6.14
Common N	6.07
Common E	6.07
Common Q	5.86
Common R	5.54
Common C	5.32
Common A	5.25
Common O	5.24
Common K	4.70

Univ. of Ky. Variety Test

Let's look are another example. In table 2, I have listed a yield trial from our U.K. Variety Testing Program. Certified Kenland produced 10.74 T/A over three years while Common produced 4.85. That's an increase of 5.89 T/A. If I value this at only \$60.00 per ton, that is an overall increase of \$353 for the better seed. Yes, I had to pay \$2.50 more per pound for the seed and at 8 lbs. per acre, that's an increase of \$20.00 per acre. Now, I'm no economist, but $\$353 - 20.00 = \332 return on my investment. Hey, that dog will hunt!

Variety	3-yr Total Yield (T/A)
Certified Kenland	10.74
Freedom!	9.83
Cinnamon Plus	9.74
Duration	9.48
Cardinal	9.00
Solid	8.20
Common	4.85

Univ. of Ky. Variety Test

POULTRY LITTER RATE STUDY IN TALL FESCUE

The expansion of the poultry industry in Kentucky over the past 10 years and an increase in the price of organic fertilizer, especially nitrogen, has led to an increase in the use of poultry litter as a source of crop nutrients. Some producers have to purchase the litter and will need to make economic decisions about the cost of the nutrients they are applying. Because litter and manures are sometimes applied without the benefit of a nutrient content analysis, they are just applied at a disposal rate, that is, at a high rate to get rid of it. To be efficient and effective, a producer should know the point at which applying more nutrients from poultry litter (or any other source) will not improve yield. Our objective was to apply poultry litter at incremental rates to determine the rate at which yield would be maximized. Tall fescue plots were treated with 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 tons of poultry litter per acre or recommended rates of inorganic fertilizer for 2 years. Our data suggests that litter rates of 2 tons/acre can produce forage yield (3.9 and 5 tons/acre in 2003 and 2004, respectively) that is equivalent to that of inorganic fertilizer (3.2 and 5.2 tons/acre in 2003 and 2004, respectively) applied at the rates recommended based on soil test data. Based on this observation, it would not be cost effective to apply at higher rates since there will not be a significant yield response to the increased litter application. (SOURCE: Byron Sleugh, W.T. Willian, R.A. Gilfillen, and H.D. Henderson IN Forage Progress, Vol. 4, January 2006)

STOCKPILING PUBLICATION REVISED

The U.K. AGR-162 publication "Stockpiling for Fall and Winter Pastures" has been revised and is now available in the bulletin room. An electronic version is also available on our website at www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage

MAILING LIST UPDATE

We are in the process of updating our mailing list. Due to the rising cost of postage, we prefer to send the newsletter electronically. If you would like to receive Forage News electronically, please send an e-mail message to Christi at 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. If you would like to continue receiving Forage News through the mail, please fill out the enclosed form. Beginning with the June issue of Forage News, we will send it only to those who have returned the form.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- MAR 10-14 American Forage & Grassland Council, San Antonio, TX
- JUN 15 Beef/Forage Field Day, UK Woodford County Farm, Versailles
- SEP 12 KFGC Field Day, Boone County
- NOV 27 Kentucky Grazing Conference, Lexington
- 2007**
- FEB 22 27th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City



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March 2006