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9-1-2005

Forage News [2005-09]

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Repository Citation

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky, "Forage News [2005-09]" (2005). *Forage News*. 150.

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FORAGE NEWS

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

SEPTEMBER 2005

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

SCOTT COUNTY TO HOST FALL GRAZING SCHOOL

The Kentucky Fall Grazing School will be held October 26-27 at the Scott County Extension Office in Georgetown, Kentucky. The Extension Office is located on Highway 25 in County Park approximately two miles north of Main Street. Registration for the two-day school is \$100.00 and includes a grazing notebook, Southern Forage book and Pocket Guide along with other handouts. The fee also includes three meals and all refreshments.

Registration is required to hold a place in the school. To register, make checks in the amount of \$100.00 payable to: Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council and send to: Rebecca Smith, 400 W.P. Garrigus Building, Lexington, KY 40546-0215 (Phone: 859-257-5985). For more information, visit our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage> or contact Dr. Donna Amaral-Phillips at 859-257-7542 (damaral@uky.edu).

The Grazing School is co-sponsored by the U.K. College of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council.

NOW IS THE TIME TO TEST

As summer winds down and fall is on our doorstep, now is an excellent time to evaluate how successful Kentucky producers were in making hay in 2005.

Two good ways to evaluate the current crop are to confirm the quantity and quality of the hay crop produced.

To determine the quantity, simply do a bale count of each cutting of hay made on the farm and then weigh several bales from each cutting (which will produce an average bale weight) and then just do the math. This should give you a fairly accurate tonnage of the hay produced this year (Don't forget to account for future storage losses, especially on hay that is stored outside.).

To determine the quality requires that a forage sample be taken from each cutting of hay and then sent to the laboratory for an analysis. Once these analyses are received you can then forward them on to your county agent who will help you formulate rations for your individual livestock operation. Once the least cost rations have been formulated you can determine if you have excess hay for sale or if in fact, you need to purchase commodity feeds to get your livestock through to spring pasture.

If you are producing cash hay for sale, then a quality analysis will also give you a better handle on the product that you have to market.

You can contact the Kentucky Department of Agriculture @ 1-800-248-4628 to schedule an appointment to have your hay tested for only \$10.00 or you can also visit foragetesting.org to view a list of the NFTA (National Forage Testing Association) certified labs around the country. (Tom Keene, U.K. Hay Marketing Specialist)

ECONOMICS OF GRAZING STOCKER CATTLE AS A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO ROW CROPS

A profitable stoker grazing model was developed that could compliment and provide diversification to crop farming operations. This project consisted of four trials over a four year period involving a total of 386 head of cattle weighing 559 pounds initially. Pastures consisted of alfalfa-orchardgrass, perennial ryegrass-white clover-endophyte free fescue, and endophyte friendly tall fescue (Max Q) fertilized with 120 pounds of nitrogen per year in two applications. Average stocking rate, total grazing days per year, animal daily gain, and total yearly beef production per acre were 2.36 animals per acre, 166, 2.12 pounds, and 813 pounds. Total production costs including amortization of fencing, water system, and seeding establishment, labor, fertilizer, machinery, interest, farm overhead, and animal costs for interest, marketing, health, and mineral were \$234 per acre. Value of gain averaged \$0.67 per pound with revenue of \$565 per acre leaving a return to the land resource of \$331. Illinois FBFM data from 2001-2004 for high quality soils in western Illinois show average revenue, expense, and return to land of \$411, \$291, and \$121 for corn and \$292, \$208, and \$83 for soybeans. Potential constraints are value of gain risk along with yearly and seasonal variation in forage production and subsequent variation in beef gain. (SOURCE: K. Nimrick, D. Oswald, and R. Staff, Western Illinois University, University of Illinois Extension, Macomb, IL, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Greenville, IL, respectively. IN: 2005 AFGC Proceedings, Bloomington, IL)

ROUNDUP READY ALFALFA

Roundup Ready Alfalfa was approved and released last month. At present, we are aware of five varieties available in limited supply in Kentucky. Cost per pound is \$7.00+ which includes all technology fees. Supplies will be more widely available next year.

NOVEL ENDOPHYTE TALL FESCUE

Last year there were two varieties of Novel Endophyte Tall Fescues available in Kentucky. This year there is only one; Max Q Tall Fescue is available through several sources in Kentucky at a price of \$4.00+ per pound. Performance data from Kentucky trials is available at our website www.ca.uky.edu/Ag/Forage under Forage Variety Trials. More varieties are likely to be available in the future.

IS IT TOO LATE TO STOCKPILE THIS YEAR?

Every year in August we recommend that you apply nitrogen to your cool season grass pastures to promote fall growth and provide stockpiled forage for late fall and winter grazing. It is now early September and we have had a very dry summer. You may be asking yourself: Is it too late to apply N for stockpiling? Is the ground too dry to get a response? Am I just wasting money? Consider what a successful cattleman in Virginia once said during a drought, "If I don't apply N I know I won't have good stockpile growth, if I apply N at least I have a chance. With the high quality forage and great gains I get from stockpiling, I'll take my chances and apply N." Our advice is much the same, if you could use stockpiled pasture this fall and winter, then consider applying N even now. KY research shows that for each lb of N applied September 1, you will get 20 lb of production from tall fescue. Even with high N prices, that's still a good deal. You may want to cut your N rate some to compensate for the later application date. Obviously the growth you can expect depends on the rainfall and how late this fall will be. You decide, but if you want high quality pasture this winter, then don't delay applying N.

KFGC AWARDS

Award nominations are now being accepted for the annual KFGC Awards to be presented February 23, 2006 at the 26th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference in Lexington. Award categories include:

Grassroots Award (Producer)
Public Service (County)
Public Service (State)
Industry

To nominate a person, please send a one page nomination to Dr. Garry Lacefield, Extension Forage Specialist, P.O. Box 469, Princeton, KY 42445 or e-mail glacefie@uky.edu

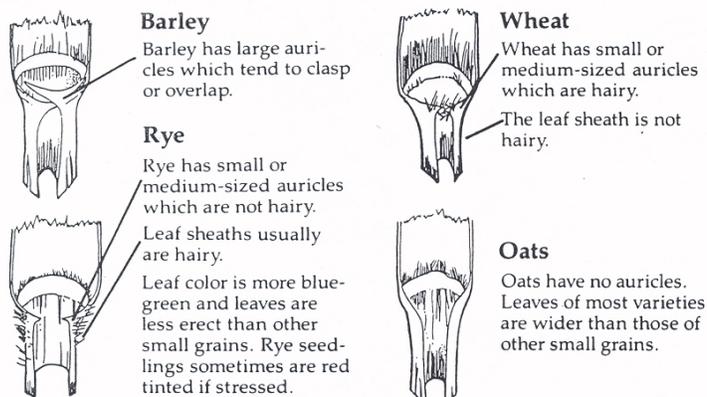
Deadline for nominations is December 14, 2005.

KFGC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO MEET SEPTEMBER 6

The executive committee of the KFGC board will meet September 6 in Elizabethtown for a planning session prior to our fall board meeting. If you have input for the KFGC or ideas for the future, please contact one of the following. Dan Grigson (dgrigson@uky.edu or 606.365.2447), Ken Johnson (Ken.Johnson@ky.usda.gov or 270.487.6589), Phil Howell (phil.howell@syngenta.com or 270.737.3516), Byron Sleugh (Byron.Sleugh@wku.edu or 270.745.5968), Ray Smith (raysmith1@uky.edu or 859.257.3358 and Garry Lacefield (glacefie@uky.edu or 270.365.7541).

Vegetative Identification of Small Grains

Identification of the vegetative growth of small grains can be difficult, but the leaf collar of most varieties of a given species exhibits unique characteristics. Triticale tends to be more variable than the other small grains.



SOURCE: Southern Forages, 3rd Ed. 2002. D.M. Ball, C.S. Hoveland and G.D. Lacefield. PPI/FAR, Norcross, GA.

Wisconsin GRAZING Dairy Farms

Tom Kriegl of the UW-Madison Center for Dairy Profitability has been analyzing financial performance of graziers with the Wisconsin Grazing Dairy Profitability Analysis every year since 1995. In the first year, data from 19 farms were summarized; that number rose to 31 in 2002. In 2000, a USDA Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems grant expanded that research to a regional study covering finances on managed grazing dairy farms in the Great Lakes states, plus Iowa and Missouri. Data from 92 grazing farms were summarized in that study in 2000; 126 in 2001; and 103 in 2002. Farmers participating in these financial surveys must earn 85% or more of their gross income from ilk sales or 90% from dairy livestock sales plus milk sales. To be considered a grazier, a farmer must harvest over 30% of seasonal forage needs by grazing and must provide fresh pasture at least once every three day.

Standardization of data handling and analysis procedures relied heavily on the farm Financial Standards Guidelines (revised December, 1997). The compute program Agricultural Financial Advisor (AgFA) was used to analyze the data.

Key Findings – Kriegl reports several key points in his analysis:

- In Wisconsin and New York, graziers were more profitable per cow and per hundredweight equivalent (CWT (EQ) than their confinement counterparts in these states. In addition, Wisconsin graziers were more profitable per cow and per CWT EQ than graziers in most other states providing data.
- Farms using managed grazing consistently showed higher new farm incomes from operations (NFIFO) per CWT EQ and lower costs per CWT EQ than traditional and large modern confinement farms in Wisconsin.
- Farmers who switch from confinement dairy farming to managed grazing need not suffer financial hardship during the transition.

And comparisons between grazing farms shows that:

- The average most profitable grazing farm in Wisconsin produced slightly more milk per cow and had slightly lower costs per cow and higher income per cow than the average least profitable grazing farm. The average most profitable grazing group had a better handle on most categories of costs, did a better job of generating income, and had lower interest, depreciation, and labor and management expenses.
- The average grazing dairy farm with under 100 cows was more profitable per cow and per CWT EQ than those with over 100 cows. Lower labor costs account for much of this advantage.
- Graziers are making a variety of strategies work for them. Some graziers use a seasonal calving strategy, some are certified organic, and some using milking parlors. No single approach seems to be the right or only way to manage a grazing dairy farm.

(SOURCE: Tom Kriegl, et al. *Pasture of Plenty*. Univ. of Wisconsin, 2005)

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCT 26-27 Kentucky Fall Grazing School, Scott County Extension Office, Georgetown

2006

JAN 25-26 Heart of America Grazing Conference, Cave City Convention Center

FEB 23 26th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Lexington

Garry D. Lacefield
Extension Forage Specialist
September 2005