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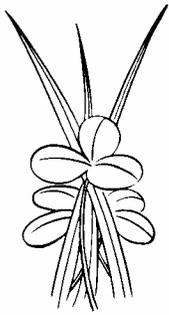
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FORAGE NEWS

DECEMBER 2003

Garry D. Lacefield, Extension Forage Specialist • Christi Forsythe, Secretary

FORAGES AT KCA

Mark your calendars and make plans to attend the Forages Conference on January 9, 2004 at the Convention Center in Bowling Green. The conference begins at 9:00 with four presentations before lunch. Featured topics include: Getting More from Your Forages, Managing Broomsedge in Pastures, Opportunities for Warm Season Perennial Grasses, and a presentation by Mr. Jimmie Thompson on "Forages in My Farming Operation." A complete proceedings will be available and there is no registration fee required for this meeting. We will finish in ample time for you to attend and participate in the Kick-off luncheon of the Kentucky Cattlemen's Convention. See you in Bowling Green.

KFGC AWARDS

Four KFGC Awards were presented during the Awards Ceremony at the 4th Kentucky Grazing Conference in Lexington on November 25. This is always a very special occasion seeing the Council's highest recognition bestowed on outstanding individuals. This years' recipients were:

Grassroots – Mr. Jason Sandefur

Industry – Mr. Mike Feldhaus

Public Service (County) – Mr. Keenan Turner

Public Service (State) – Dr. Tim Phillips

Congratulations, Jason, Mike, Keenan and Tim.

4TH KENTUCKY GRAZING CONFERENCE

Over 175 people from nine states attended the 4th Kentucky Grazing Conference held at the Fayette County Extension Office on November 25. Speakers covered many practical topics on "grazing" including: Optimize Grazing – Manage Stored Feed, Opportunities for Warm Season Grasses, Environmental Benefits of Grazing, Economics of Improved Grazing, and Efficient Pasture Systems for Beef, Dairy, Horses and Goats.

CHARACTERISTICS TYPICAL OF PROFITABLE DAIRY GRAZIERS IN WISCONSIN

There are many factors that contribute to profitability. There are few or none that ensure profitability. This makes it difficult to provide a recipe of the three, five or other number of factors, practices or steps to profit. The factor that comes closest to ensuring profitability is management – a factor that can often be recognized when seen but not always easy to

describe or imitate. Still, it is possible to identify some factors or practices that can help a dairy grazier be successful. **Many of these factors apply equally to other dairy systems.**

1. They use a variety of tools that measure performance and provide management decision-making information. For example, Wisconsin graziers who use DHI (paying for the service and ignoring the reports is not using it) are more likely to be in the top half group when sorted by measures of profitability. Soil testing, feed testing and up-to-date financial records are among the other measuring tools that help many financially successful graziers achieve their success.
2. They try to learn from other people's mistakes instead of making their own. They seek information in a variety of ways, including pasture walks, grazing networks, UWEX, Vo-Tech, etc.
3. They are as serious about the quality of the non-pasture forage fed to the herd as they are about the quality of the forage grazed from their pastures.
4. They strive to feed a balanced ration for the production level they achieve. This doesn't necessarily mean that they try to maximize economic production—although some do, of course. All things considered, an unbalanced ration is usually less profitable.
5. They pay attention to the productivity of their soils. This doesn't always mean that they apply large amounts of lime and/or commercial fertilizer—although some do. It means that they capitalize on the nutrients from legumes and manure and that they supplement these sources with purchased fertilizer when appropriate.
6. They find ways to reduce labor requirements or make work easier. One of the most effective ways to do this is with low cost, labor-efficient milking parlors. There are other ways to reduce labor requirements.
7. They tend to have lower amounts of debt per cow and per CWT EQ. However, in many cases, the low debt is a **result of** rather than the cause of their financial success.
8. They make use of machinery, equipment and/or facilities that are considered obsolete for Traditional Confinement and Large Modern Confinement systems.
9. **They avoid expensive experiments.** Examples of expensive experiments includes the planting of unproven pasture varieties, and the use of unproven soil and ration additives/amendments. **Another example** of a current expensive experiments for many (not all) dairy graziers is crossbreeding. This is not because crossbreeding lacks potential but because too many lack a plan, the time or the herd size needed to crossbreed effectively. Generally

profit on a dairy farm is difficult enough without expensive experiments.

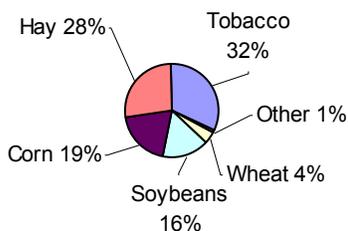
- They have an effective breeding and reproduction management system that includes artificial insemination (doesn't have to be exclusive), and reliable heat detection. They achieve a calving interval and turnover rate that is appropriate for their system.

(SOURCE: Tom Kriegl, Farm Financial Analyst, University of Wisconsin Center for Dairy Profitability)

ALFALFA AVERAGE INCREASE

Over 900,000 tons of alfalfa hay was produced in Kentucky during 2002. Alfalfa acreage increased by 50,000 acres in 2002. We will discuss this any many other aspects facing alfalfa at the 24th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference on February 26, 2004 at the Cave City Convention Center.

Distribution of Kentucky Crop Values for 2002



OPPORTUNITIES FOR WARM SEASON GRASSES

Native warm season perennial grasses were an important part of the native forage species of Kentucky, supplying food and cover for deer, buffalo, and other wildlife when settlers arrived into Kentucky. With settlers plowing, overgrazing, and the introduction of other forages, Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSGs) were on the brink of extinction. These grasses included switchgrass, eastern gamagrass, indiagrass, and big bluestem. Over the past several years, there has been interest in re-establishing these grasses back into Kentucky, for soil conservation, wildlife and forages for livestock.

There are two different types of warm season grasses, native and introduced. Of course, native were already here, introduced came from Asia. Introduced WSGs are fine stemmed, leafy grasses that are grazed or mowed shorter and more frequently than natives, they are bermudagrass and Caucasian Bluestem. Introduced grasses may be more productive, but do not form good wildlife habitats. In the past, most of the native WSGs were used for wildlife habitats, this is changing as more emphasis is placed on mid summer production.

Cool season grasses of Kentucky like tall fescue, orchardgrass, bluegrass, and timothy are the primary forage grasses. For summer production Kentucky must look for options during the summer. The cool season grasses are productive in spring and fall but become semidormant during summer. The WSGs produce almost twice the tonnage of cool season forages. Warm season grasses are more palatable than fescue in the summer; they produce steer gains in summer months of over two pounds a day compared to nine tenths of a pound for fescue. Other benefits of WSGs is their ability to be grown on a wide range of soils, they fill a niche in year-round forage production in the summer. Less fertilizer is required for acceptable production, but NWSGs will respond higher in outputs if fertilizer is provided.

Nothing is all positive. WSG seed is more expensive. Management is a key to grazing or mowing for hay. They are not as easy to establish as cool season grasses. It takes at least two years to get a complete stand. Some seeds have to be chilled before planting, while others need to be soaked in water. Special drills may be needed, because seed placement is vital for optimal growth of WSGs. Probably the most important is the control of competitive grasses and weeds.

Establishing NWSG is no easy task, but new advantages in herbicides, no till drills and experience have increased our success in establishing grasses.

Furthermore, NWSGs can not be grazed like cool season grasses because of several major differences. These include length of rest period needed, sensitivity to close grazing, the need for 8-12 inch residual forage heights, and the need for rest before going into the winter.

Warm season perennial grasses have the potential to supply grazing for Kentucky during the summer when most cool season grasses are least productive. The producer can expect very little production for the first year. However, good forage quality and quantity can be rendered if managed and maintained with patience. NWSGs may work with some producers and may not fit in other programs. I hope you think about these thoughts with an open mind, this might work for you. (SOURCE: Ken Johnson, USDA-NRCS District Conservationist, Proceedings of 4th Kentucky Grazing Conference, Nov. 25, 2003, KFGC-03-3)

COSTS OF MAINTAINING A BEEF COW IN KENTUCKY, ILLINOIS OR MICHIGAN

State	Kentucky	Illinois	Michigan
Feed cost, purchased and home raised, \$	191	227	238
Non-feed, cash costs \$	141	142	156
Total cash and value of home raised feed \$	332	369	394
Feed as a % of total	57.5	61.5	60.4

(SOURCE: Dr. John Johns, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, University of Kentucky)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- DEC 7-10 National Conference on Grazing Lands, Nashville, Tennessee
- 2004**
- JAN 9 Forages at KCA, Bowling Green
- JAN 22 Heart of America Grazing Conference, Evansville, IN
- FEB 7 Southern Forage Workshop, Chattanooga, TN
- FEB 26 24th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City
- APR 20-21 Kentucky Grazing School, Hardin County
- JUN 12-16 American Forage & Grassland Council, Roanoke, VA
- JUN 24 KFGC Field Day, Russell Hackley Farm, Grayson County



Garry D. Lacefield

Garry D. Lacefield
Extension Forage Specialist
December 2003

Merry Christmas to one and all! May this Holiday Season be filled with lots of joy and cheer!