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Forage News

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11-1-1999

## Forage News [1999-11]

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky

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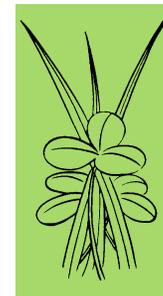
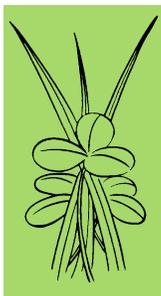
### Repository Citation

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky, "Forage News [1999-11]" (1999). *Forage News*. 220.

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# FORAGE NEWS



## In this month's issue:

- Forages at Farm Bureau • Forages at KCA • 20<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference
- How's Your Hay Supply? Quality? • KFGC President's Corner • KFGC Award Winners Announced • Eden Shale Early Weaning Experiment • Kentucky Hay
- Upcoming Events

## November 1999

*Garry D. Lacefield and Jimmy C. Henning, Extension Forage Specialists • Christi Forsythe, Secretary*

### FORAGES AT FARM BUREAU

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the Forage Commodity Conference at the Annual Farm Bureau Convention. The Forage Commodity Conference will be held December 6 from 10:15 to 11:45. The program committee has put together three timely topics that should be of interest to all participants. The topics include: Drought of '99: Impact & Implications; Kentucky Hay: Supply, Quality Testing and Ration Balancing; and Reviving Drought Stressed Pastures with Legumes. See you December 6 at 10:15 in Louisville.

### FORAGES AT KCA

This marks the fifth consecutive year that we have joined forces with the Kentucky Cattlemen's Convention. The conference will be January 7 from 9:30 - 11:00 at the Executive Inn West in Louisville. The program committee has selected a 'Grazing' theme and put together three very timely topics. Topics include: The Value of Improved Grazing Management; Putting Forage Species Together for Year-round Grazing; and Dollars and Sense of Intensive Grazing. See you January 7, 9:30 at the Executive Inn West in Louisville.

### 20<sup>TH</sup> KENTUCKY ALFALFA CONFERENCE

Our "Twentieth Anniversary Kentucky Alfalfa Conference" will be held February 24 at the Cave City Convention Center. New features include an Awards Program and a Silent Auction. Since it is our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we will have TWO (2) 'Keynote' speakers. Dr. Don Ball, nationally recognized Forage Specialist from Auburn University and Dr. Becky Greenwald, nationally recognized Industry Leader in Alfalfa, will be featured on the program. Highlights of the program include:

- 8:00 Registration, Visit Exhibits, Silent Auction  
9:00 Welcome -  
    *Dr. Oran Little*, University of Kentucky  
    *Mr. Larry Jeffries*, American Forage & Grassland Council  
    *Mr. Steve Johnston*, Alfalfa Council  
    *Dr. Monroe Rasnake*, Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council  
9:20 Kentucky Alfalfa Conference: After Twenty Years - *Dr. Garry Lacefield*  
9:30 Agronomic and Economic Importance of Selecting the Right Alfalfa Variety - *Dr. Jimmy Henning*  
9:45 Advances in Seed Coating - *Mr. Bill Talley*  
10:00 Fertilizing Alfalfa for Profit - *Dr. Monroe Rasnake*

- 10:15 Break, Visit Exhibits, Silent Auction  
10:45 Herbicide Options for Spring Seeded Alfalfa - *Dr. J. D. Green*  
11:00 An Alfalfa Disease Calendar - *Dr. Paul Vincelli*  
11:30 Hay Testing & Marketing - *Mr. Allen Johnson*  
11:45 Opportunities for Alfalfa as a Grazing Crop - *Mr. Ken Johnson*  
12:00 Lunch, Visit Exhibits, Silent Auction, Awards Presentation  
1:00 Reducing Alfalfa Harvesting Losses - *Dr. Mike Collins*  
1:30 Little Known Facts About Alfalfa - *Dr. Don Ball*  
2:00 Changes in Alfalfa Breeding - Where is Alfalfa Headed? - *Dr. Becky Greenwald*  
2:30 Discussion, Silent Auction Results, Adjourn

### HOW'S YOUR HAY SUPPLY? QUALITY?

**INVENTORY:** How much hay do I have? For many of us who started feeding in July, our supply is much less than we planned back in the spring. Fortunately, across much of Kentucky we put up a lot of hay this spring. In addition, many had carryover from last year. At this stage, we need to take a serious inventory of hay available including number of bales and a realistic estimate of bale weights.

**EVALUATE:** What is the quality of my hay? Many of you were able to put up some excellent quality hay this year; for most however, our quality was lower than we would like because of stage of maturity when harvested and rain during spring haymaking. Evaluating hay quality is especially important this year.

Several years ago researchers in Tennessee divided alfalfa hay into three lots - Good, Fair, and Poor. They sampled and tested each lot and found the "good" hay had 18.7% protein and 29.4% fiber. The "fair" hay had 16% protein and 35% fiber followed by the "poor" hay with 13.7% protein and 47% fiber. The next and ultimate step in evaluating forage quality was animal performance. They fed each lot of hay to 550 lb steers. Average daily gains were 1.85 for "good", 1.49 for "fair" and -.06 for "poor". Although the poor hay had 13.7% protein, the high fiber (47%) resulted in animals losing weight during the study.

Since we cannot afford to run feeding trials on our hay, our best method of evaluating is to have our hay tested. The Department of Agriculture's Hay & Grain Division offers a very efficient-affordable hay testing service. A toll free phone call (1-800-248-4628) is all that is needed to have a trained individual to visit your farm and sample your hay. A subjective evaluation of the hay will be made when the hay is sampled. The hay will be tested with results returned to you and your county agent. Total charge for the sample and test is only \$10.00 per lot. A

"lot" is defined as hay taken from the same field, same harvest, same type of harvest conditions, and same weather conditions during harvest and with the same method of storage.

**EFFICIENT FEEDING:** Once the nutritional content of the hay is known, it can be matched and allocated based on quality and animal needs. Animal needs vary in both quantity and quality. Better quality hay should be fed to young calves, yearlings, bred heifers, and lactating cows, leaving the lower quality hay for the mature, dry, pregnant cows whose nutrient requirements are much lower. When forage quality is not sufficient to meet cows needs, supplementation is required.

**REDUCE HAY FEEDING LOSSES:** How can I reduce my feeding losses? This is an especially important question this year. Kinds of feeding losses include: trampling, leaf shatter, chemical and physical deterioration, fecal contamination, over consumption, and refusal. These losses are associated with feeding method, intervals between feedings, amounts fed at one time, weather conditions, and number of animals being fed.

Feeding losses in various research trials have ranged from less than 2% under conservative feeding methods to over 60% where no attempts were made to reduce loss. Feeding losses of 3-6% are quite common and acceptable for most conservative feeding programs, although the lower losses are usually associated with systems of feeding requiring high labor inputs and daily feeding.

## KFGC PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The severe drought experienced this fall has many Kentucky farmers looking for a forage that will do better in hot, dry conditions. While there are some better adapted to hot weather such as native warm season grasses, old world bluestems and bermudagrass, none will be very productive without water. One that I am concerned about that is trying to take advantage of the situation here and in other states is "world feeder" bermudagrass. I recently attended a meeting in Northern Kentucky where "world feeder" was being promoted. Their claims of 12 to 20 tons of hay per acre and 16 to 23% protein levels without irrigation are absurd - even for Texas. About the only statement they made that I could agree with was "Even if world feeder only does half as well for you, it will be a miracle." Before considering this or any other bermudagrass, farmers need to know that very few bermudagrass varieties are adapted to Kentucky and even those that are will not be productive without water. (*Monroe Rasnake*)

## KFGC AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The 1999 award winners for KFGC were presented at the annual meeting in Lexington on October 5. Bill Green, UK County Agent for Agriculture in Graves County was awarded the County Public Service to Forages in recognition for his outstanding forage educational programs. The State Public Service Award winner was Joe Wyles, Farm Manager and Research Specialist at UK's Eden Shale Research Farm in Owen County. Joe has been integral in research programs from multiple departments, conducted at the Eden Shale farm. In recent years, Joe has helped host the Kentucky Grazing Schools at the farm. John Long, Agripro Seed Representative from Shelby County was presented the Industry Service to Forages Award. John has been a strong leader in the alfalfa seed business, and has been a long term supporter of the Kentucky Alfalfa Conference. The top forage farmer award, The Grassroots Award, was presented to Russell Hackley, a cattleman and intensive grazer from Shelby County. Russell runs a 375 acre farm in Grayson County and has cooperated with many research and demonstration projects. Russell has been active in KFGC and is currently serving his first term as a director. Congratulations to all of these winners.

## EDEN SHALE EARLY WEANING EXPERIMENT

One of the ways to deal with pasture shortage due to drought is to early wean calves. This summer at Eden Shale, a group of cows and calves were split and one half of the calves were weaned at 124 days old and the other half were weaned at normal

weaning time. The calves to be early weaned were introduced to creep feed for two weeks prior to weaning. They were weaned on pasture with a fence separating them from their mothers. After weaning they were fed 7.5 lbs of a concentrate ration and continued to rotationally graze the same fescue pastures as the unweaned calves and their mothers. The unweaned calves were not creep fed. The weaned calves out gained the unweaned calves by one fourth lb. per day during the experiment. Following regular weaning, the calves were grouped together and newly weaned calves slightly out gained the early weaned calves for the first 35 days after weaning but had only made up part of the weight advantage of the early weaned calves. The main advantage to early weaning was in the cows. Cows from the early weaned calves gained 2 lb. per head per day and increased 1.25 in body condition score during the 40 days the calves were early weaned thus having them in better condition going into the winter or putting them in a more favorable market condition if one wanted to sell them. (*Joe Wyles, Carrie Schultz*)

## KENTUCKY HAY

All hay production was forecast at 4.79 million tons, unchanged from August but down 16 percent from 1998. Alfalfa hay was forecast at 700,000 tons, unchanged from August and down 20 percent from last year. This would be the smallest alfalfa crop since 1983. Yield was estimated at 2.8 tons per acre. Other hay production was forecast at 4.09 million tons down 15 percent from last year. Yield was forecast at 1.9 tons per acre. Initial cuttings of hay were very good this year due to the mild winter and the excellent spring growing conditions. Subsequent cuttings declined in quality as the crop began to exhibit drought stress. There is concern about potential hay shortages this winter as many farmers have been feeding hay for several months to compensate for the poor quality of pastures. (*SOURCE: Kentucky Agri-News, Vol. No. 18, Issue No. 20, Released October 12, 1999*)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| DEC 3       | One-Day Grazing School, Daviess County Extension Office, Owensboro    |
| DEC 14      | One-Day Grazing School, Warren County Extension Office, Bowling Green |
| DEC 6       | Farm Bureau Forage Commodity Conference, Galt House, Louisville       |
| <b>2000</b> |   |
| JAN 7       | Forages at KCA, Executive Inn-West, Louisville                        |
| FEB 24      | 20 <sup>th</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City               |
| JUL 16-     | 19 AFGC, Madison, WI  |
| JUL 20      | U.K. All Commodity Field Day, Princeton                               |

Garry D. Lacefield  
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Jimmy C. Henning  
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*Extension Forage Specialists*