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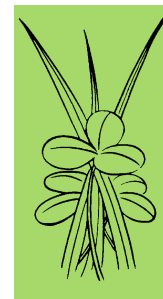
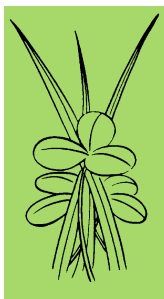
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FORAGE NEWS



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April 1999

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

KENTUCKY ALFALFA CONFERENCE TO CELEBRATE 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The 19th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference was a big success. Over 200 people from 14 states attended the full days activities at the Cave City Convention Center. Participants visited with 31 exhibitors and heard from nine speakers including our keynote speaker, Commissioner Billy Ray Smith.

Conference organizers are already planning for the 20th Anniversary Conference. Tentative dates are February 23-24, 2000 at the Cave City Convention Center.

CORRECT WEB ADDRESS FOR VARIETY TESTING PUBLICATIONS

An earlier web address for variety testing reports for forage crops was incorrect. The correct web address to view these reports is: <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/respubs.htm>

This site contains all the UK Agricultural Experiment Station Progress Reports (the forage reports are of this type) listed oldest first. The current forage publications are at the end of the list.

SPRING INTO KENTUCKY GRAZING SCHOOLS

Spring is the time to sign up for one of several grazing schools in Kentucky. The first is the 3-day school to be held at the Owen County Extension Office on April 28-30 (Wednesday - Friday). This is a hands-on school that combines classroom teaching with field instruction and registration is limited to the first 45. The cost is \$125, payable to the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council. At this school, you will receive about \$75 in grazing publications, 2 suppers, 3 lunches, and refreshments, all of which are included in the registration fee.

Three one-day schools (Mini-Grazing Schools) are also offered. Spring Mini-Grazing Schools will be held on May 13 - Morehead State University, May 18 - Springfield (Washington County Extension Office), and May 19 - Eastern Kentucky University (Perkins Complex). Advance registration is necessary and can be done by contacting Jimmy Henning at the address below. The fee is \$20 per person and this includes a one-year membership in the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council, a copy of Southern Forages, the Kentucky Beef Book, a Grass-Legume Identification publication and more. These schools are made possible by a grant from the KY Dept. of Agriculture.

To register for these schools, please contact Jimmy

Henning, UK Agronomy, N222D Ag Science North, Lexington, KY 40546-0091. Phone: 606 257 3144; Fax: 606 323 1952, Email: jhenning@ca.uky.edu. These schools are all approved for CCA credit.

KENTUCKY FORAGE & GRASSLAND COUNCIL - President's Corner

The council is "off and running" in 1999 with a very successful 19th Annual Alfalfa Conference in Cave City on March 4. Over 200 people attended and learned some new things about growing and using alfalfa. It is appropriate that the 20th anniversary of the Kentucky Alfalfa Conference will occur in the year 2000. We are planning to make it extra-special.

Several other activities are scheduled for 1999. The spring grazing school is planned for April 28-30 at the Eden Shale Farm. An autumn school will be held at the UK Research and Education Center in Princeton on October 12-14. Previous grazing schools have been filled to capacity; so, check with Jimmy Henning soon if you're interested in this years' schools. One day "mini" grazing schools are also scheduled for May 13 in Morehead, May 18 in Springfield and May 19 in Richmond. These serve as good introductions to rotational grazing principles.

Two forage field days are scheduled for 1999. The first will be May 22 in Boyd County. David Ditsch (606-666-2438) who is located at the Robinson Substation in Quicksand, is coordinating this field day. Our annual forage/beef field day cosponsored by the Kentucky Cattlemen Association is scheduled for June 15 from 10 AM to 3 PM. It will be in Crittenden County at Triple W Farms operated by Mark and Scott Williams. Rotational grazing and baled silage making will be on the forage tour. The beef tour will highlight the use of ultrasound, supplemental feeding, value adding and economic efficiency. Reserve the dates on your calendar and look for more information that will be coming out soon.

As an added bonus to our producer members, we have a coupon book that is worth \$250 off the price of forage seed from several companies. These are free to all new and renewed memberships. Check with Jimmy Henning for this new benefit. (*Monroe Rasnake*)

LIME COATING AFFECTS

There is no doubt that lime coating will affect the rate at which alfalfa seed flows through most seeding equipment. Work at the University of Wisconsin and at UK has found that lime

coating can increase seed flow by 30%. This is backwards from what you would think would happen, since lime coating increases the size of the seed.

Further work with drill and seeder calibration this spring has indicated that the manufacturer of the seed coating can affect the amount of increase in flow rate. The following are the basic points of what our best understanding of the seed coating/flow rate issue.

1. It appears that the Celpril coated seed (Rhizocoat is the tradename) flows through drills at a faster rate than seed coated by Seedbiotics. Check the seed tag to be sure which one you have. This is just an observation at this point, and the definitive study has not been done.
2. The amount of increase in flow rate for Celpril coated seed appears to be 30% over uncoated seed at setting that will deliver full seeding rates of alfalfa. The amount of increase at these same settings for Seedbiotics materials is about 22% (in a no-till drill mechanism - see next point).
3. One study this spring with a billion seeder calibrated with Seedbiotics coated alfalfa seed versus uncoated seed basically found no difference due to the presence of coating.

The bottom line is that you should check the calibration of seeding equipment for the seed you are using whether it is coated or not. For no-till drills you can expect to have to adjust the drill openings to slow seed flow by 20 to 30% when using lime-coated seed. For billion seeders, this may not be necessary at all.

If this issue seems confusing to you, you are not alone. We at UK will continue to research the issue of seed coating and flow rate and will get this information to you. In the meantime, please check drill calibrations.

HOW MANY ALFALFA PLANTS ARE NEEDED?

The answer to that question depends on your goals. If you are trying to produce high yields, more plants are needed per unit area. If you are grazing beef cows in summer and your other pastures are dominated by endophyte infested Tall Fescue, then it won't take a lot of alfalfa in the pasture to improve animal performance.

Historically, we have said that five healthy crowns per square foot were needed for optimum yields. Work in Kentucky and Missouri has shown that excellent yields could be obtained with three healthy crowns per square foot. In Kentucky, excellent beef gains per acre were observed on an alfalfa-orchardgrass mixture when alfalfa averaged only one plant per square foot.

Workers in Wisconsin, Minnesota and other states have suggested that stems per square foot were more reliable than crowns. Their data suggest that 55 or more stems per square foot had the potential for optimum yields. When stems per square foot drop below 39, consideration should be given to replacing or improving the stand. Stem counts from 40-55 would result in some yield reduction.

PASTURE AERATION TOOLS

Farmers often have questions regarding soil compaction in pasture fields and the potential benefits of pasture aeration tools. A recent publication from Mississippi State University describes the results of tests using a spike-tooth aerator and other tillage tools on bahiagrass and bermudagrass pasture fields. These were done at two locations over a four year period. Basically, the results showed no benefits from any of the treatments.

If you think soil compaction may be a problem in your pastures, visit with your County Extension Agriculture Agent. Most have compaction testers that can be used to determine if there is a problem. Soil compaction in Kentucky pastures is seldom serious enough to cause a loss in production. Any compaction that occurs is normally near the surface where it can be alleviated through freezing and thawing in the winter and biological activity such as earthworms and plant roots. (*Monroe Rasnake*)

FENCE AND WATER SYSTEMS FOR MANAGEMENT-INTENSIVE GRAZING

Fence and water are used as tools in management-intensive grazing (MiG) systems to control the presence and activity of livestock in the grazing unit. Water is generally the first major problem or opportunity to surface when developing MiG systems and needs close evaluation early in the planning process. Of the nutrients necessary for life, water ranks second only to oxygen in importance. Evaluate water in terms of quantity and quality available and determine how water location will affect grazing distribution, nutrient cycling, and trailing patterns. Water quantity and quality must be appropriate for the class or classes of livestock involved. Inadequate provision of water will limit production more rapidly than any other nutrient. Water developments to keep livestock within 250 m of water are usually very cost effective in tame pasture situations while greater distances are appropriate for range conditions. Location and condition of existing fence should be considered when developing plans for the grazing unit. It is usually time and cost effective to develop paddocks within the framework of existing fence. However, existing fences should not dictate location of new paddock boundaries if another location would result in better pasture and animal performance. Modern MiG management owes its existence to the development of dependable, cost effective electric fencing. Power fencing installations can be permanent, temporary, or a combination of both. (*SOURCE: Maurice Davis, ABSTRACTS AFGC/SRM, Vol. 52 SRM/Vol. 8 AFGC, Feb. 1999, p. 16*)

UPCOMING EVENTS

APR 28-30	KY Grazing School, Eden Shale
MAY 13	KY Grazing Mini-School, Morehead
MAY 18	KY Grazing Mini-School, Springfield
MAY 19	KY Grazing Mini-School, Richmond-EKU
MAY 22	KFGC Sponsored Forage Field Day, Boyd Co.
JUNE 15	KFGC/KCA Field Day, Crittenden Co.
JULY 15	Agronomy Field Day, Spindletop Farm, Lexington
JULY 22	All Commodity Field Day, UK Robinson Experiment Station, Quicksand
OCT 12-14	KY Grazing School, U.K. Research & Education Center, Princeton

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