



11-1-1998

Forage News [1998-11]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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FORAGE NEWS

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

FORAGES CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

The annual forage conference co-sponsored by The Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council and UK Cooperative Extension Service was attended by 130 people (80 in Lexington and 50 in Princeton). The theme of the conference was "Beefing Up Your Forages" and included several topics on growing more and better forages, then marketing it through beef cattle or hay sales. There were also topics on using large square balers for making hay in Kentucky and what's coming in the way of new grass varieties. If you missed this one, you missed a good one. (*Monroe Rasnake*)

KFGC AWARD WINNERS

Four distinguished Kentuckians were recognized with statewide awards during the KFGC Annual Conference held at Lexington October 27 and Princeton October 28. We congratulate each award winner and wish each the very best. Below is a list of award category and 1998 recipient:

Grassroots - Mr. Minos Cox

Public Service-County - Dr. Luther Smith

Industry - Mr. Bill Cisney

Public Service-State - Commissioner Billy Ray Smith

Congratulations Minos, Luther, Bill and Billy Ray. Our thanks to Mr. Bill Talley, Chairman of the Awards Committee for an excellent job of selecting and presenting the 1998 awards.

CONGRATULATIONS DR. POWELL

Our congratulations to forage commodity committee member Dr. A. J. Powell, Extension Turf Specialist, University of Kentucky for being selected to receive the 1998 Fred V. Grau Turfgrass Science Award. This prestigious national award was presented at the American Society of Agronomy meetings in Baltimore. CONGRATULATIONS, A.J.!

LANDMARK EVENT FOR FORAGES IN NEBRASKA

On February 21-26, east will meet west in Omaha, Nebraska in the form of the first ever joint meeting of the American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) and the Society for Range Management (SRM). Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council members are also affiliate members of AFGC, and Lexington was host to the national meeting in 1995. This year's meeting represents the coming together of these two organizations, and represents a tremendous opportunity for farmers.

The program will feature symposia on Management

Intensive Grazing, Making and Marketing Hay as a Cash Crop, the national hay contest, a forage spokesperson contest, and seminars, papers and posters on the latest in grazing and hay research from literally across the country. In addition, Larry Jeffries, retired Henry County livestock and hay producer will take over as President of the American Forage and Grassland Council at the Omaha meeting.

To get more information about this conference, you should contact Jimmy Henning at 606.257.3144, jhenning@ca.uky.edu or the AFGC headquarters office at 1.800.944.2342. To find out more about the program and also to register on-line, you should point your web browser to <http://srm.org/meetings.html>. A suggestion, members of the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council (which makes you an AFGC member) get a substantial discount off the meeting registration fee. For KFGC membership information, contact Jimmy Henning.

HAY BALES DON'T ALWAYS "WEIGH-UP" TO EXPECTATIONS

ABIP project participants were somewhat surprised this summer when their round bales didn't "weigh-up" to their expectations. Hay bales were weighed on hay quality and the combined farm projects, as well as one breeding season project and one whole farm project. The purpose behind weighing the bales was to calculate yields and calculate phosphorus and potassium removal from hay fields using forage analysis results. In the process, participating producers learned that their bales weren't as heavy as they expected. All but one producer were over estimating bale weights by at least 200 pounds.

Since most producers were baling only one species of grass, most of the variation in bale weight was due to differences in bale tightness and moisture. The average bale weight across farms ranged from 522 to 1,416 pounds. The heaviest bale weighed this summer was 1,632 pounds.

What can be learned from this exercise: (1) producers don't really know how much hay they are producing or feeding until they actually weigh their hay and (2) quality aside, someone may be paying too much or not getting paid enough for hay, whether it's the farmer spending \$20 for a lightweight 500 pound bale or a hay producer selling a heavy 1,400 pound bale for \$20 a roll. (*SOURCE: Arkansas Beef Improvement Program, Oct. 1998*)

MINIMIZING LOSSES IN HAY STORAGE AND FEEDING

Each year more than 60 million acres of forage crops are harvested for hay in the United States. Annual production from this acreage is over 150 million tons of hay valued at more than 12 billion dollars. Hay is the most widely grown mechanically-harvested agronomic crop in the United States.

As a source of nutrition for livestock, hay offers numerous advantages. It can be made from many different crops; when protected from the weather it can be stored indefinitely with little nutrient loss; package sizes and shapes can vary greatly; and harvesting, storage, and feeding can vary from being done by hand to being completely mechanized. Hay often can meet, or almost meet, the nutrient needs of many classes of livestock.

Because of its many merits, hay is the most commonly used stored feed on livestock farms across the nation. Unfortunately, losses of hay during storage and feeding are often high, particularly with round bales stored outside in high rainfall areas such as the eastern United States. It is estimated that the total value of hay storage and feeding losses nationwide exceeds three billion dollars annually! On some farms, such losses account for over 10% of the cost of livestock production. (SOURCE: *Minimizing Losses in Hay Storage and Feeding*, D.M. Ball, et al., 1998)

EVENING GRAZING IS MORE EFFICIENT

Research from Great Britain shows that dairy cows on pasture consume the greatest amount of pasture four to five hours before dark. About 40% of the cows daily pasture intake occurred in the period between evening milking and dark. Cows put on pasture after the morning milking grazed for less time (2 to 3 hours) and consumed less pasture than the evening grazing group. In the last five weeks of the research trial, cows on pasture after the evening milking produced 5% more milk than cows allowed on pasture only after the morning milking. (SOURCE: *Pennsylvania Forage & Grassland News*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Fall 1998)

ROUNDUP READY ALFALFA?

You knew it was only a matter of time. With Roundup Ready corn and soybeans technology already being marketed it was only a matter of time until alfalfa followed suit. Monsanto recently licensed Roundup Ready technology for alfalfa to Forage Genetics (an alfalfa breeding and variety development company with headquarters in Wisconsin). Forage Genetics alfalfa breeder Mark McCaslin indicates that field testing of Roundup Ready alfalfa is already underway. McCaslin, however, cautions that the first Roundup Ready variety probably won't be introduced until after the year 2000. (SOURCE: *Pennsylvania Forage & Grassland News*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Fall 1998)

ENDOPHYTES IN PERENNIAL RYEGRASS

We have spoken much over the years about the tall fescue endophyte, but did you know that there is also a related fungus that grows within perennial ryegrass. The fungus is very similar in growth characteristics to the one found in tall fescue. It never grows outside the plant, its presence gives the perennial ryegrass some improved agronomic characteristics, and it can cause some negative animal problems.

The primary problem that endophyte infected ryegrass causes is a condition known as ryegrass staggers. This is primarily a concern for sheep and horses. Endophyte infected perennial ryegrass would not be a good pasture for sheep, horses, or beef cattle.

The good news is that most if not all forage-type perennial ryegrasses are endophyte-free. However, companies are not required to put the endophyte infection content on bags of perennial ryegrass that are sold. So check with your ag distributor or dealer before purchasing perennial ryegrass, especially for horses or sheep.

Turf-type perennial ryegrasses, especially the newer varieties tend to be highly infected with the endophyte and should especially be avoided.

We have made some inquiries about the varieties of perennial ryegrass that are endophyte-free. These include: Polly 2 (Southern States), Bison (Green Seed), and BG-34 (Barenbrug). While we expect these varieties to always be available only in the endophyte-free form, it would be an outstanding idea to double check with the distributor and get a seed test if there is any doubt.

PREFERENCE BY RUMINANTS AMONG TALL FESCUE CULTIVARS

ABSTRACT - Ruminants have been shown to selectively graze to obtain a diet of high nutritive value. When grazing physical aspects of the pasture such as morphology and herbage mass may alter the preference exhibits. Eight tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb.) cultivars (Mozark, Mo96, C-1, Kenhy, Ky 31, FFR1, Barcel, and HiMag) were harvested, air dried, baled and processed through a hydraulic bale press (knives spaced at 10 cm) prior to feeding. Preference experiments using sheep and goats in confinement were conducted. This removed most physical difference among cultivars tested. After an adjustment period, animals were offered every pair (eight hays = 28 paired comparisons) of hays. Relative preference, with excess hay on offer, was expressed as the ratio of the quantities of hay consumed. Preference for tall fescue appeared to be two dimensional for both sheep and goats. Both species strongly preferred Kenhy and strongly selected against Barcel in dimension one. In dimension two, both species selected against Barcel, but varied in their top preferences. (J.C. Burns, H.F. Mayland and D.S. Fisher, 1998 *ASA Abstracts*, p-147.)

UPCOMING EVENTS

DEC 10 Kentucky Farm Bureau Forage Commodity Conference, Louisville

1999

JAN 8-9 Kentucky Cattlemen's Convention, Louisville

FEB 21-26 AFGC/SRM Conference, Omaha, NE

MAR 4 19th KY Alfalfa Conference, Cave City

APR 28-30 Kentucky Grazing School, Eden Shale

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Forage News, November 1998