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## Forage News [1998-10]

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

### FALL GRAZING SCHOOL

There are a few spots left in the Grazing School which is scheduled for Princeton on October 13-15. If you are interested in attending, call Ken Johnson at 502-487-6589.

### ONE DAY GRAZING SCHOOLS

Three "One Day Grazing Schools" will be offered in November. All programs will begin at 8:30 and conclude at 3:00. A registration fee of \$20 includes all handouts, "Southern Forages", "Kentucky Beef Book" Grass Identification publication, other helpful publications and complimentary membership in the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council. The program will be held Tuesday, November 3 at the Monroe County Extension Office in Tompkinsville; Wednesday, November 4 at the Western Kentucky University Ag. Expo Center in Bowling Green; and, Thursday, November 5 at Murray State University, W. Kentucky Expo Center in Murray. The program is open to anyone who wants to attend; however, space is limited, so contact Ken Johnson - 502-487-6389 to reserve your place.

### FORAGE CONFERENCE

Mark your calendar for either October 27 or 28 and plan to attend the Fall Forage Conference. The conference will be held at the Fayette County Extension Office on October 27 and repeated at the University of Kentucky Research & Education Center on October 28. The theme for this year's conference is "Beefing Up Your Forages". A registration fee of \$15 includes lunch, breaks and a copy of the proceedings. The activities begins at 7:00 (local time):

- 7:00 Exhibit and Silent Auction setup
- 8:00 Registration (coffee and refreshments)
- 8:30 Critical focus points in a profitable forage program—*Jimmy C. Henning*
- 9:00 Weed management decisions that pay—*J.D. Green*
- 9:30 How to make broadcast seedings of clover work—*Doug Shepherd*
- 10:00 Break - Bid on Silent Auction and visit

exhibits

- 10:30 Making and marketing hay for profit—*Garry Lacefield*
- 11:00 First look at the mid-size square baler in Kentucky—*Michael Collins*
- 11:30 What's coming in new grass varieties—*Brett Winsett*
- Noon Lunch and Awards program
- 1:00 Understanding profitability in cow-calf operations—*Steve Isaacs*
- 1:30 Making money with stocker cattle—*John Anderson*
- 2:00 Profitable reproductive management decisions—*Les Anderson*
- 2:30 Taking your beef cattle operation to the next level—*Roy Burris*

### FORAGES AT KCA

"Getting More Value From Legumes in Kentucky Pastures and Hay Fields", is the theme for the 1999 Forages at the Kentucky Cattlemen's Convention Program. The program will be held at the Executive West in Louisville on January 8 beginning at 9:30. A proceedings will be available. The program includes:

- 9:30 Role and Importance of Forage Legumes in Kentucky Pasture and Hay Fields—*Dr. Garry Lacefield*
- 10:00 Establishing Legumes for Pasture and/or Hay—*Dr. Jimmy Henning*
- 10:30 BLOAT: What is it? What causes it? How do I reduce the risk?—*Dr. Patty Scharko*
- 11:00 Getting the Most Out of Your Legume Based Pastures—*Dr. Roy Burris*
- 11:30 Discussion

### PRUSSIC ACID POISONING

The primary cause of hydrocyanic (prussic) acid poisoning in domestic animals is the ingestion of plants containing this potent toxin. Cyanide-producing compounds (cyanogenic glucosides) occurring in living plant cells are converted to prussic acid when cells are crushed or otherwise ruptured.

The prussic acid potential of plants is affected by species and variety, weather, soil fertility and stage of plant growth. Plants of the sorghum group and leaves of wild cherry trees have a potential for producing toxic levels of prussic acid.

*Cause:* Prussic acid is one of the most potent toxins in nature. As ruminants consume plant materials containing cyanide-producing compounds, prussic acid is liberated in the rumen, absorbed into the bloodstream and carried to body tissues where it interferes with oxygen utilization. If toxin is absorbed rapidly enough, the animal soon dies from respiratory paralysis.

*Symptoms:* When lethal amounts are consumed, dead animals may be found without visible symptoms of poisoning. Symptoms from smaller amounts include labored breathing, irregular pulse, frothing at the mouth and staggering.

*Prevention:* Forage species and varieties may be selected for low prussic acid potential. The risk from potentially dangerous forages may be reduced by following certain management practices:

1. Graze sorghum or sorghum cross plants only when they are at least 15 inches tall.
2. Do not graze plants during and shortly after drought periods when growth is severely reduced.
3. Do not graze wilted plants or plants with young tillers.
4. **Do not graze for two weeks after a non-killing frost.**
5. **Do not graze after a killing frost until plant material is dry (the toxin is usually dissipated within 48 hours).**
6. **Do not graze at night when frost is likely.**
7. Delay feeding silage 6 to 8 weeks following ensiling.
8. Do not allow access to wild cherry leaves whether they are wilted or not. After storms always check pastures for fallen limbs. (SOURCE: University of Kentucky, ASC-57.)

### DROUGHT STRESSED PASTURES

We have presently come through one of the driest August in years and pasture is very short across Kentucky. We would like to address some of the most frequently asked questions that we have been getting regarding pasture and cattle.

First: *Is the nitrogen that I applied in August going to do any good when rain comes?* If it was in the form of ammonium nitrate, the nitrogen will be there to stimulate grass growth. If it was in the form of urea, some or most of it could have been lost due to urease activity.

*Can I still get some response to nitrogen on fescue?*

The short answer is yes, but it is definitely a case of diminishing returns. UK research shows that one pound

of nitrogen applied to tall fescue on September 1 will produce almost 20 pounds of forage dry matter yield by late fall. That same pound of nitrogen applied October 1 will give a 10 to 1 return.

If you are considering applying N to tall fescue for late fall grazing, keep this in mind: Number 1, do not expect severely overgrazed pastures to grow much again this fall unless conditions are remarkably good. You are much more likely to get good growth on hayfields or fields that have not been overgrazed.

Second, do not use the higher rates (by that we mean the 90 pound per acre of actual N) for fertilizing pastures. You will not see any more production by exceeding 45 to 50 pounds of actual N per acre. (150 ammonium nitrate).

*How can I make the pasture I have go further?*

Number 1, consider feeding some hay. Cattle condition can be your guide, and the fall calving cows may be especially needy for extra nutrition as they calve and go through early lactation.

Another way to extend pasture is to strip off areas and ration the grass that is available. Research from the University of Missouri found that allocating a 3 day supply rather than a 14 day supply extended the grazing days by 40%.

*Will drilling rye into my fescue ground give me more fall grazing?* We get this question nearly every year, and this year especially. The short answer is no. There is too little soil moisture for significant growth when rye is seeded into sod, even sod that appears completely dormant. In bare areas, you will get some fall growth.

There are two points we would like to make in closing: First, short pastures are good candidates for renovation with clover next year, and second, writing an article on drought stressed pastures surely must be a good way to make it rain. We certainly hope so.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- OCT 13-15 Kentucky Grazing School, UKREC, Princeton
- OCT 18-22 American Society of Agronomy, Baltimore, Maryland
- OCT 27-28 KFGC Conference, Lexington-Princeton
- NOV 10-12 Alfalfa Intensive Training Seminar, Minneapolis, Minnesota

### 1999

- JAN 8-9 Kentucky Cattlemen's Convention, Louisville
- MAR 4 19<sup>th</sup> KY Alfalfa Conference, Cave City
- APR 28-30 Kentucky Grazing School, Eden Shale

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