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FORAGE NEWS

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

NATIONAL ALFALFA SYMPOSIUM

The 28th National Alfalfa Symposium and 18th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference was a big success. The combined meeting was held at the University Plaza Hotel and Convention Center in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Over 260 people attended the two-day event from 27 different states and three countries. Over forty speakers presented the latest information on alfalfa establishment, production, management, harvesting and utilization. The exhibit hall was full with some exhibits in the lobby. Highlights of the Symposium included a blue ribbon Kentucky farmer panel and both state and national awards. Congratulations are in order to Cecil and Jean Cade of Bowling Green for receiving the KFGC Grassroots Award. Dr. David Stipes received the Public Service (State) Award and the County-based Award went to Darrell Burks and Terry Gibson of Metcalfe County. J.W. Stephens received the Industry Award. Mr. John Nowak of Pembroke received the National Certified Alfalfa Seed Council Producer Award. Congratulations to all - we're proud of you.

Copies of the 170 page Proceedings are available from the Certified Alfalfa Seed Council, c/o Ms. Sharon Bowen, California Crop Imp., Seed Certification Ctr., Univ. of CA, Davis, CA 95616 at a cost of \$15 which includes shipping.

STATEWIDE KCA/KFGC FIELD DAY PLANNED

A joint field day of the KCA and the KFGC will be held on the Greg Ritter Farm in Barren Co. on Thursday June 18 beginning at 4pm. The program is just now coming together, but will include stops on rotational grazing, renovation, beef alliances and marketing and many other items. There will be commercial exhibitors. A complimentary meal will be served. More information will follow as it is available.

NITROGEN FOR EARLY GRAZING

Don't forget that applying 40 to 60 lbs of actual N per acre now can speed the green up of grass pastures. Many of these are already greening up, but the added N can boost the yield of these fields. For each lb of N applied in spring, expect 45 lb of forage dry matter to be produced. Young spring grass that has been nitrated can be low in Mg, so continue to use Mg mineral mixes to prevent grass tetany. Do not apply N to fields that have been seeded to clover this spring.

CHRISTI FORSYTHE RECEIVES AWARD

Forage News co-editor, Christi Forsythe, was recognized at the National Alfalfa Symposium with a Special Service Award. The award was presented in recognition of her many contributions to Kentucky Forages. She has been co-editor of Forage News since its inception and secretary for 18 consecutive Alfalfa Conferences and three National Alfalfa Symposiums. Christi is a staff assistant at the University of Kentucky Research and Education Center. She and her husband, John, live on a farm in Caldwell County. They have two children, Janet a sophomore at Campbellsville University and Michael a senior at Caldwell County High School. Congratulations, Christi.

GRAZING SCHOOL UPDATE

The Kentucky Grazing School will be conducted twice during 1998. The spring school will be April 21-23 in Owen County and the fall school will be October 13-15 in Princeton. The school is open to all. The registration fee is \$125 which includes several meals and all educational materials. You must send in your registration fee to hold your spot. These checks will not be cashed until after the grazing school has been completed. For more information, contact Jimmy Henning (606 257 3144) or Ken Johnson (502 487 6589).

ROUND BALE SILAGE

Baled silage offers a way for Kentucky farmers to conveniently and inexpensively produce silage with present hay making equipment (adapted to wet forage). Bale wrappers vary in cost from approximately \$3000 to over \$12000 depending on the level of automation and control desired. The benefits of making baled silage come from more timely harvest, lower dry matter losses during curing and storage, less change for rain damage, and better retention of leaves in high quality forage crops like red clover and alfalfa. Disadvantages include handling heavy bales, maintaining plastic integrity, adapted baling equipment to handle wet forage, and plastic disposal. (SOURCE: Mike Collins, Univ. of Kentucky. Proceedings 28th National Alfalfa Symposium, Bowling Green, KY, Feb. 1998)

VARIETY TRIAL INFORMATION

The 1997 alfalfa and red clover yield trial results are available in county offices. These publications are free. Tall fescue and orchardgrass reports will be out later.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALFALFA TO WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

ABSTRACT—Alfalfa growers throughout the world appreciate the high-yielding, high quality characteristics of their crop, and its value to the farm enterprise. However, this appreciation typically ends at the farm gate. There are few individuals in the general public who are aware of the economic importance of alfalfa (the third largest US crop, worth 7 billion) much less the other benefits that alfalfa provides to the landscape. The unique characteristics of alfalfa contribute significantly to broader societal goals, such as preservation of wildlife habitat and protection from erosion. Alfalfa has a significant role as a nitrogen fixer, for improvement of soil tilth and soil organic matter, for reducing fuel requirements of agriculture, as an insectary for beneficial insects, and as a habitat for many species of wildlife. These important contributions are in addition to its significant economic value in its own right, and the critical role alfalfa plays in dairy and other livestock industries. Although steps can be taken by growers to improve interactions between forage production and wildlife (such as protection of nesting waterfowl), alfalfa should be more broadly recognized by the general public for its diverse benefits, and for its fundamental contribution to the long-term sustainability of agricultural systems and to improved wildlife habitat. (SOURCE: Dan Putnam, Univ. of California. Proceedings 28th National Alfalfa Symposium, Bowling Green, KY, Feb. 1998)

PLANTING DATE, FUNGICIDE, AND CULTIVAR EFFECTS ON SCLEROTINIA CROWN AND STEM ROT SEVERITY IN ALFALFA

ABSTRACT—This study was conducted to determine the effect of planting date, fungicide, and cultivar on severity of Sclerotinia crown and stem rot (SCSR) and subsequent productivity of alfalfa. The cultivars Armor and A9109 were seeded no-till in May, early August, mid August, and late August 1993 and 1994 in a sod uniformly infested with sclerotia of *Sclerotinia trifoliorum*. Four applications of the fungicide vinclozolin effectively controlled the disease. Averaged over years and cultivars, disease severity (percentage of plot area affected) in the no-fungicide treatment was 4, 12, 23, and 41% for the spring, early August, mid August, and late August plantings, respectively. Armor had higher disease severity than A9109 in the 1993 seeding, but not in the 1994 seeding. Forage yield the year after seeding reflected differences in disease severity ratings. The risk of severe SCSR damage in no-till summer seedings of alfalfa can be reduced dramatically if stands become established early enough so

plants reach at least 10 weeks of age by the time apothecia emerge in the fall. (SOURCE: R.M. Sulc and L.H. Rhodes, The Ohio State University, IN Plant Disease, Jan. 1997)

FORAGE QUALITY VARIATION AMONG MAIZE INBREDS: IN VITRO FIBER DIGESTION KINETICS AND PREDICTION WITH NIRS

ABSTRACT—The nutritive value of forage maize (*Zea mays* L.) may be improved through genetic selection for increased rate of fiber digestion or decreased indigestible fiber concentration. To identify sources of genetic variation, 45 maize inbreds were evaluated for in vitro neutral detergent fiber (NDF) digestion kinetic parameters using stem internode tissue harvested at silking during 2 yr. Near infrared reflectance spectroscopy (NIRS) was also used to estimate NDF digestion kinetic parameters. Maize inbreds varied significantly in NDF concentration and digestion kinetic parameters using either conventional in vitro analysis or NIRS predictions. Using NIRS predictions, inbreds varied in NDF concentration from 497 to 662 g kg⁻¹ dry matter (DM), rate of NDF digestion ranged from 0.037 to 0.077 h⁻¹, and extent of NDF digestion was 525 to 735 g kg⁻¹ NDF. The ranges for NIRS predicted parameters were less than those observed for the calibration data set by conventional analysis. Correspondence between conventional analysis data and NIRS predictions were good, except for lag time. Digestion kinetics calculated from NIRS predicted residues provided more precise predictions of lag time and fractional rate of digestion when compared with observations derived from conventional analyses, than did direct prediction of these kinetic parameters. Correlations between rate of NDF digestion and 18-h NDF digestibility (R = 0.79) or between potential extent of NDF digestion and 96-h NDF digestibility (R = 0.95) were large enough that these two fermentation intervals might substitute for conducting complete digestion kinetic studies with eight to 10 fermentation times. The substantial genetic variation among these maize inbreds shows good potential for development of silage hybrids with improved fiber digestion parameters. Year and year x genotype interactions were significant suggesting that identification of superior inbred lines will require evaluations in multiple environments. (SOURCE: H.G. Jung, D.R. Mertens, and D.R. Buxton, IN Crop Sci. 38:205-210, 1998)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAR 8-10 AFGC, Indianapolis, IN
APR 21-23 Kentucky Grazing School, Owenton
JUL 16 U.K. College of Agriculture All Commodity Field Day, UKREC, Princeton, KY

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MAR 98 Extension Forage Specialist