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## Forage News [2018-03]

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# Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock producers in Kentucky informed

Dr. S. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, MS.~ Editors

March 2018

## Clear as Mud

Mud is a problem for cattle; it slows and complicates feeding, exposes herds to greater pathogen loads, and can increase their energy requirements if it



mats down their hair coat. Mud increases the probability of nutrient runoff, impairing the environment and losing fertilizer nutrients that are needed on the farm.

*The infrastructure solution.* Adding concrete feeding structures and other all-weather surfaces can minimize or reduce mud. Installing heavy use pads using filter fabric, rock and limestone is also very helpful. Disadvantages include cost, difficulty in having enough area for larger groups of livestock, and the need to scrape and handle manure. To get more information on these options, google 'UKY all weather surfaces.'

*The feeding solution.* Feeding methods can be altered to reduce mud. Unrolling round bales moves the hoof traffic around the farm, but generates more hay waste than other methods. Bale unrolling will spread manure and urine over a larger area than with ring feeders or feeding structures.

Bale grazing is gaining in utility for some Kentucky producers is. This feeding method places bales across the feeding area in late fall. Temporary fencing is placed around these bales to allow allocating this forage to livestock as needed over the winter.

*The forage solution.* Maintaining heathy vigorous stands of grasses like Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue for overwintering areas will help. Bluegrass is a sod-former and the foliage of tall fescue resists the weathering that happens with orchardgrass. Grass stands managed for adequate residual heights will have greater root volume in the soil to support hoof traffic.

*The re-seeding method.* Farm layout and management needs often mean some fields are torn up every year. To bring these fields back into some level of production, consider reseeded with temporary forages.

Perennial and annual ryegrass provide short term options that are quick to establish and relatively inexpensive. Annual ryegrass will establish very quickly

and is inexpensive; however annual ryegrass will only survive to mid-summer. Perennial ryegrass survives two seasons but is a bit more costly and slightly slower to establish. Unlike other cool season grasses, ryegrasses can be broadcast on top of the ground and will still germinate and take root if rains are consistent. Even when overseeding ryegrass, dragging is recommended. Use 25 to 30 pounds of seed per acre at a minimum.

Crabgrass can be seeded with ryegrass or alone if the seed will be lightly covered after broadcasting. These seed will lie dormant in the soil until the warmer weather of late spring. Crabgrass will provide grazing late into the summer, given good emergence and strategic applications of nitrogen.

Calling these 'solutions' is a bit of an overstatement. But infrastructure, feeding methods, forage management and even reseeding are tools to help deal with mud. Happy foraging. ~ Dr. Jimmy Henning, reprinted from The Farmer's Pride

## Forage Timely Tips: March

- ✓ Continue pasture renovation by no-tilling seed with clovers
- ✓ Smooth and re-seed hay feeding areas and heavy traffic areas
- ✓ Control competition from grasses with young clover plants by grazing or mowing as needed
- ✓ Prepare for spring seeding of alfalfa
- ✓ Begin grazing if growth permits
- ✓ Plan and implement grazing system and rotation
- ✓ Identify weeds and select the appropriate herbicide to control those weeds for a weed-free pasture

## Catch up from the Alfalfa Conference

The 37<sup>th</sup> KY Alfalfa and Stored Forages Conference was held on Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> in Cave City, with a strong line up of speakers, gracious support from sponsors and good turnout for the conference. All presentations were recorded and are now posted on the KY Forages YouTube Channel, KYForages, and proceedings can be found on the UK Forage Extension Website, [forages.ca.uky.edu](http://forages.ca.uky.edu).

## Early Bird Registration extended for the March 8th Novel Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop

Discounted registration has been extended through Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> for the Novel Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop, but space is limited! Reserve your spot today for this day long workshop focused on understanding and managing novel tall fescues and reducing toxic tall fescue in your grazing system. Speakers include KY forage extension specialists Ray Smith, Jimmy Henning, local producers currently managing novel tall fescue stands, research and extension specialists from the Alliance for Grassland Renewal, and seed company representatives. The event will be held at the Bluegrass Stockyards in Lexington and includes lunch, a tour of the UK tall fescue research plots and all handouts. Register online at <https://2018ukynoveltallfescue.eventbrite.com>.

## Featured Publication: Flood Damage and Recovery Management for Forages (FSA3145)

Flood damage to forages can be quite variable depending on several factors, such as time of year, temperature, soil texture, flood duration and water movement. Flood events of one day or less usually have low impact on forage survival. However, if the field was ready for hay harvest, the top growth may be damaged or unsuitable for harvest after the flood recedes. Such fields should be checked for debris and silt cover before considering hay harvest. Timing of flood occurrence relative to forage growth stage also has a large impact on forage survival. For more details on how flooding affects forage stands, download the entire article by John Jennings at the Univ. of Arkansas at [www.uaex.edu/publications](http://www.uaex.edu/publications).

## Reclaiming Broomsedge Infested Pastures

Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus* L.) is a native warm-season grass that can dominate poorly managed pastures and hayfields. While it



has little value as a forage, it does provide good nesting habitat for birds such as turkey and quail. Broomsedge in pastures and hayfields is often an indication that something is not quite right. In most cases it is related to low soil fertility and poor grazing management. Read on to discover some approaches to reduce broomsedge and promote desirable forages.

**Soil test and adjust fertility.** Many people say that broomsedge infested pastures need lime. This may be true in some cases, but I have found over the years that they are more commonly low in phosphorus. Soil testing is the only way to tell what amendments you need to apply.

**Manage grazing and clipping to favor desirable forage species.** In many cases, there are desirable forage species in broomsedge infested

pastures. By adjusting soil fertility and managing grazing to favor these species we can make them more competitive. Normally these species are cool-season grasses. So not grazing them closely and frequently during the summer months will get them ready to grow in late summer and fall when temperature and moisture conditions are ideal.

**Clip pastures in late summer or early fall.** Clipping broomsedge once in late summer or early fall once just before it produces seed can reduce shading of desirable forage species, making them more competitive in the stand.

**Apply nitrogen fertilizer in early fall.** After we clip pastures in late summer, applying 60 lb N/A can stimulate desirable cool-season grasses helping to shift the botanical composition away from broomsedge.

**Feed hay on broomsedge infested pastures.** This is a low input way of increasing soil fertility over time. Each ton of hay contains approximately 50 lb of nitrogen, 15 lbs of phosphorus, and 60 lbs of potassium. It is important to remember that although feeding hay does bring nutrients into a grazing system, it is a much slower way to build fertility than applying commercial fertilizer or broiler litter. Make sure to move feeding points around the pasture to get a more even nutrient distribution.

**Burn broomsedge infested pastures.** Not the best idea, because native warm-season grasses evolved under burning. This means that burning can actually enhance broomsedge stands.

**Apply nitrogen in late spring or early summer and graze broomsedge.** The idea is to make the broomsedge more palatable and graze it during the summer months. The problem with this approach is that desirable forage species will tend to be overgrazed during the summer, putting them at a disadvantage. This approach may actually make your broomsedge problem worse over time.

**Kill the existing pasture with nonselective herbicide and reestablish it.** Although this is a viable approach to controlling broomsedge, without proper soil fertility and grazing management, the broomsedge will come back. In addition, this is by far the most time-consuming and expensive approach.

Controlling broomsedge in pastures and hayfields will require a sustained effort of improving both soil fertility and grazing management. So make a plan, implement it, and over time you will see reduction in broomsedge as your desirable forage species become more competitive.

To learn more about integrated weed control in pastures, contact your local extension office or visit the "UK Weed Science Website" at <https://weedsience.ca.uky.edu/forages> ~ Dr. Chris Teutsch, reprinted from Cow Country News

## Upcoming Events

MAR 8 - Novel Tall Fescue Workshop, Lexington, KY

MAR 20 - KY Fencing School, Princeton, KY

MAR 22 - KY Fencing School, Versailles, KY

APR 24-25 - KY Grazing School, Princeton, KY

May 31 - Equine Farm/Facilities Expo, Harrodsburg, KY

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## See additional stories on page 3!

### Grazing School Scheduled for April 24-25 in Princeton

The spring Grazing School will be held in Princeton on April 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Program highlights include benefits of rotational grazing, portable water systems, laying out a grazing system, economics of grazing and hands on activities. Registration is \$50 and includes all materials, grazing manual, breaks and lunches. For more information, visit the UK Forage Extension website at [forages.ca.uky.edu](http://forages.ca.uky.edu).

### Registration still open for the Versailles Fencing School

Spots are still available for the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Fencing School at UK's C. Oran Little Research Farm-Beef Unit in Versailles. During the daylong training, participants will learn about the state's fence law, fencing economics, construction basics and electric fencing basics. They will also have hands-on fence building opportunities with instruction from industry experts. Registration is \$30 and due by March 5<sup>th</sup>. The March 20<sup>th</sup> school in Princeton is sold out. Register online at <https://2018kyfencing.eventbrite.com>.

### Quote of the Month: Forages, particularly the grasses, are the most important plants on the face of the Earth. ~ Glenn W. Burton.

Forage became a critical source of human food with the killing and eating of the first grazing animal. Today, forage grasses provide most of the nutrition for cattle, sheep, goats, horses and mules. They also protect and improve our soils, contribute to clean water and air, play a major role in decelerating releases of carbon into the environment, account for about 25% of the total value of U.S. agriculture, occupy about 50% of the total land area of the U.S. and provide recreation, wildlife habitat and esthetic value. In addition, large seeded grasses that include the grain crops, corn, rice, wheat, barley, rye, oat, sorghum and millets supply about three-fourths of the energy and about half of the protein consumed by humans. As Dr. Burton stated many years ago, without question, forages really are the most important plants on Earth. Purchase Forage-Livestock Quotes and Concepts books for \$5 each by contacting [ukforageextension@uky.edu](mailto:ukforageextension@uky.edu).

### KFGC Awards Presented at the 37th Alfalfa and Stored Forages Conference

The 2018 Garry Lacefield Award recipient is UK Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler. Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler is Associate Extension Professor in the Department of Animal and Food Science at the UK College of Agriculture Food and the Environment. Jeff grew up on a small, diversified farm in Southern Indiana and has advanced degrees from Purdue and the University of Missouri. Dr. Lehmkuhler's work focuses on improving the nutrition of Kentucky's beef cattle herd where he is a big proponent of the use of improved forages like alfalfa. He is a patient and insightful mentor for farmers and county agents alike and received the 2016 Southern Section American Society of Animal Science Extension Award for his accomplishments in outreach efforts. Dr. Lehmkuhler developed the Master Stocker Program, is Co-Chair of the Master Grazer Program Committee and is an integral part of many others. Congratulations Dr. Lehmkuhler!



The 2018 Charlie Schnitzler Award recipient is Mark Thomas, alfalfa producer from Fleming County. Mark's farming operation focuses on the growth and production of high quality alfalfa hay and haylage. He is a long-term supporter of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's hay testing program, and actively tests hay and haylage he produces. He places a priority on the production of high quality horse and dairy forage, and is at the forefront of the use of hay technology like Roundup Ready alfalfa, continuous moisture sensing while baling and using preservatives in the production of high quality hay. Mark is actively renovating tracts of the original family farm and surrounding farms by establishing forage cover around streams - reducing runoff and reclaiming pasture productivity.

Mark's quality alfalfa and alfalfa-grass hay has been recognized several times by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and the Kentucky Alfalfa Conference. Mark has also been very active in the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council including serving on its board of directors. Congratulations Mark Thomas!



The Warren Thompson Industry Award for 2018 is presented to the Akridge Farm Supply Family. Established in 1933 by T.R. (Ruble) Akridge, the Akridge Farm Supply Store has been the source of quality feed and seed for the farmers of the Fredonia Valley of Kentucky. Beginning with a General Store in Fredonia, the family business now has a second location in Eddyville. What began as a General Store has grown into a full service agri-supply business.

Akridge farm supply is truly a family business, extending to the fourth generation. Ruble Akridge's son Dean came into the business in the 1960's and grew the business to the size it is today. Now the business is actively managed by Ruble's grandson Paul (Eddyville) and Gary Holland (Fredonia). Akridge Farm Supply has been supplying alfalfa seed to the farmers of the Fredonia Valley for over 75 years. Congratulations to the whole Akridge Farm Supply Family!

