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Forage News [2019-08]

University of Kentucky Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

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Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed

Krista Lea & guest editors Jimmy Henning and Chris Teutsch

August 2019

Reclaiming Rundown Farms - Western KY Summer Forage Tour

Join us August 6th for the Western KY Summer Forage Tour in Ohio County, KY. Tour topics include restoring pasture productivity, integrated weed management, watering systems, summer annuals, crabgrass as forage, and much more. The Daugherty's farm is in various stages of renovation. Participants will see improvements that have been made, improvements that are being implemented, and learn about future plans. The tour will feature frank and open discussions on various approaches to restoring the productivity of neglected farms. Discussion and questions will be highly encouraged! Register online at: <https://wkyforagefieldday.eventbrite.com> ~ Rehanon Pampell

Oats for Fall Pasture or Hay

Fall is just around the corner. Could you use some extra pasture or hay in late September and October? Oats might be your answer.

Oats may be one of our most under-used fall forages. That's right. Plain old dull oats. It grows fast, thrives under cool fall conditions, has excellent feed value, and can produce over 2 tons of hay or pasture yet this year. Plus, it dies out over winter, so it protects soil without causing planting problems next spring.

To plant oats, drill about 3 bushels per acre in early August to early Sept for maximum yield potential. Planting after Labor Day is not recommended due to a short growing season. A fully prepared seedbed is usually best, but you can plant oats directly into wheat stubble or other crop residues if weeds are killed ahead of planting. Even flying oats onto corn or bean fields severely damaged by weather or to be chopped early for silage can work, although rye tends to work better for flown on seed. Avoid fields with herbicide carryover, and topdress 50 pounds of nitrogen per acre unless the previous crop was heavily fertilized.

With good moisture, oats will be ready to graze about 6 to 8 weeks after emergence. Calves and yearlings can gain over two pounds per day. Be careful to avoid grass tetany on lush oat pasture; ask your veterinarian if you should supplement with magnesium. Also, don't suddenly turn livestock out on oat pasture if they have been grazing short or dry pastures. Sudden respiratory problems can occur.

For hay, cut oats soon after plants begin to dry out following a killing freeze, or cut earlier if plants reach a desirable growth stage. Oats can accumulate nitrates, so test hay before feeding.

If you have good soil moisture, give fall oats a try. Some of your best forage growth may still be ahead of you. ~ Bruce Anderson

Quote of the Month: Livestock Don't Make Long-Range Plans

Grazing animals don't plan ahead. As a result, their behavior often results in impacts that are not in the best long-term interest of either forages or themselves. For example, if given access to a large amount of hay or a large amount of forage in a pasture, they will waste a great deal of it. If they have the opportunity to do a lot of selective grazing, they will focus on the most desirable plants and plant parts, which puts stress on productivity and competitive ability of these plants. If given the opportunity, they will graze young, tender forage in early spring or after a drought which reduces later forage growth. This is why management decisions by humans are so important to productivity and sustainability of a forage-livestock system. Forage-Livestock Quotes and Concepts, vol. 2 is available online at foragequotebook.com.

KFGC Central KY Field Day

Loretto Motherhouse Farm in Loretto KY will be hosting the KFGC annual field day on August 24th. Program topics include grazing summer annuals, grass fed beef, stockpiling tall fescue and round bale haylage. Lunch will be provided, visit the UK Forage Extension website for more information or to register.

Forage Timely Tips: August

- ✓ Make plans to attend Eastern Kentucky Forage Field Day at Loretto Motherhouse Farm.
- ✓ Slow grazing rotation for cool-season pastures to allow more rest time. Do NOT graze closer than 4-5 inches.
- ✓ If cool-season pastures are not growing, feed hay in a sacrifice area to avoid damaging these pastures.
- ✓ Graze summer annuals and perennials.
- ✓ Plant winter annuals after first good rain in August if Fall grazing is desired.
- ✓ Identify pastures that will be stockpiled for winter grazing. Graze or clip these pastures and apply 60 -80 lb N/A in mid to late August.
- ✓ Rest pastures that are being stockpiled.

Publication of the Month: Stockpiling for Fall and Winter Pasture (AGR-162)

Many cattle producers can take advantage of the late summer-fall growing conditions to obtain high-quality pasture for fall and early winter grazing. This practice is called stockpiling. Management decisions for optimum stockpiling include selecting grass species, timing, fertilizing, grazing management or utilization, selecting classes of cattle, and designing grazing systems for efficient utilization. Find this and other forage publications on the UK Forage website and click "Publications".

The Birth of a Rotational Grazing System

This spring, Graham Cofield, extension agent in Trigg County started to work with Alana Baker-Dunn and her farm crew at River Bend Farms to set up a simple rotational stocking system. This particular cow-calf herd had unrestricted access to 120 acres of pastures. Using temporary electric fencing and a solar charger, Graham and the farm crew installed two cross fences dividing the 120-acre pasture into three 40-acre pastures (Figure 1). They configured the cross fences so that each paddock contained a preexisting water source, in this case a pond. And so, a rotational grazing system was born!

The farm crew had doubts that a single strand of polywire would hold the cows in place, but after eight weeks and only one stray cow, they have become a believer in the power of electric fencing. When people have bad experiences with electric fencing it is most often related to improper installation and not training the animals to the fence. For a single stand of polywire to control livestock, it needs to be hot, with a minimum of 5,000 volts, but preferably 6,000 volts. This means selecting the correct energizer and making sure that it is properly grounded. For tips on electric fencing, see this month's fencing tip at the end of this article.



Figure 1. A 120-acre past at River Bend Farms located near Cadiz, KY was subdivided using a solar fence charger and temporary electric fencing into three 40-acre pastures.

want an animal's first experience with an electric fence to be a bad one. Normally animals are trained to electric fencing in 2-3 days. Animals that cannot be trained to electric fencing should be culled.

One of the big benefits of using polywire to make initial pasture subdivisions is that it is temporary. If you don't like where it is, just move it. This becomes much more difficult when you install permanent fencing. I would highly recommend that you make your initial subdivisions

with temporary fencing until you are 100% certain that is where you want your permanent fence.

Currently, Graham and the crew are rotating pastures every 2 to 3 weeks and the animals have already caught on to the new system. In fact, at a recent field day, the cows did not run away when three trailers carrying more than 60 people came into the pasture, but flocked to the trailers and started bellowing so loud that the field day speakers could not be heard. They were demanding new pasture! Although the ideal interval for rotating pastures is 2-3 days, the most important thing is to just get started. Any rotation is better than none.

The summer months can often be a challenge for livestock producers. So what happens when you rotate through your pastures and get back to the first one and it has not regrown due to high temperatures and drought? Although it is tempting to open all the gates and let the animals roam, the best thing to do is to confine the animals to a sacrifice area and feed hay. This keeps you from damaging pastures by overgrazing them during a drought. When the rain comes, your rested pastures will recover much more quickly than your neighbors.

Change is often uncomfortable and that first step can be difficult. However, transitioning from a continuous to a rotational stocking system will have a profound impact on not only the productivity of your pastures, but also the behavior of your animals. If need help getting started, give your local extension agent or conservation specialist a call! More information on grazing management can be found on the UK Forages website and the KYForages YouTube Channel.

We would like to thank the Kentucky Beef Network and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund for their support of the Master Grazer Program and this demonstration. ~ Chris Teutsch (Originally published in the Cow Country News, June 2019 Issue)

Caldwell County Horse Farm to Host Field Day

Kim and Rob Weber of Weber's Retired Horses will be hosting an equine field day on September 5th. The Weber's were a demonstration farm for a resource conservation grant beginning in 2017 and will be showcasing the improvements on their farm. Topics include Feeding From the Inside Out, Using Cost Share to Reduce Overgrazing, Establishing Horse Pastures and Maintaining a Healthy Horse. This event is free and a meal will be provided. Visit the UK Forage Extension website for more information. ~ Krista Lea

Upcoming Events (see website for details and online registration)

- AUG 6 - KFGC Field Day, Ohio County, KY
- AUG 24 - KFGC Central Field Day, Loretto, KY
- SEPT 5 - Equine Field Day, Princeton, KY
- SEPT 10-11 - Fall Grazing School, Versailles, KY
- SEPT 26 - Beef Bash, Versailles, KY
- OCT 29-30 - Heart of America Graz. Con., Covington, KY
- OCT 31 - Western KY Grazing Conf., Hopkinsville, KY
- NOV 1 - Pasture Walk with Jim Gerrish, LaCenter, KY
- JAN 5-8- AFGC Annual Conference, Greenville, SC

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