Forage News

Forage News [2019-09]

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Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed
Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, editors

Heart of America Grazing Conference
Join us for the 2019 Heart of America Conference -- Kicking the Hay Habit: Optimizing Profitability. The keynote speaker, Jim Gerrish, is an independent grazing lands consultant providing services to farmers and ranchers on both private and public lands across five continents. With a BS in Agronomy from the University of Illinois and MS in Crop Ecology from University of Kentucky, he served 22 years of beef-forage systems research and outreach while on the faculty of the University of Missouri-Forage Systems Research Center (FSRC). His research encompassed many aspects of plant-soil-animal interactions and provided the foundation for many of the basic principles of Management-intensive Grazing. He was also a co-founder of the very popular 3-day grazing management workshop at FSRC. Aside from his monthly column in The Stockman Grass-Farmer magazine for over 12 years, Gerrish has authored two books on grazing and ranch management – “Management-intensive Grazing: The Grassroots of Grass Farming” published in 2004 and “Kick the Hay Habit: A Practical Guide to Year-Round Grazing” published in 2010. Today, he is an instructor in the University of Idaho’s Lost River Grazing Academy held twice annually near Salmon, ID. He typically speaks at 40 to 50 producer-oriented workshops, seminars, and field days around the US and Canada each year. Register today at https://2019hoa.eventbrite.com

Register now for Fall Grazing School, Sept. 10-11 in Versailles, KY
As Dr. Henning suggests, highly successful forage producers invest in themselves. Invest in yourself and your operation by attending the Fall Grazing School, September 10-11 in Versailles KY. Learn valuable grazing methods for new and experienced graziers with the goal to extend the grazing season and minimize stored feed. Topics include rotational grazing, temporary fencing, portable/seasonal water systems, rejuvenating run-down pastures and economics on grazing. Registration is $50 and includes all educational materials and lunch. Register today at https://2019FallKYGrazing.eventbrite.com or contact Rehanon Pampell at 270-365-7541.

Forage Timely Tips: September
- If not already done, soil sample and apply fertilizer as needed.
- Plant perennial grasses and legumes. Consider using a novel endophyte tall fescue.
- Harvest hay as needed. Do NOT harvest alfalfa after mid-September.
- Scout pastures, identify perennial weeds and woody brush. Consult an agricultural professional to determine the control strategy.
- Closely monitor livestock and do NOT overgraze. Pasture plants accumulate energy reserves in the fall that help them overwinter and regrow in the spring.
- Feed hay to allow pastures to stockpile for winter grazing.
- Rest native warm-season grass fields until after frost for better winter survival.

The Wonder Grass: the History of Tall Fescue in the United States
This book is now available as a free download at https://aurora.auburn.edu//handle/11200/49449
Blue-green Algae: Dangerous to Pets and Livestock

Blue-green algae, also called cyanobacteria, are microscopic organisms normally present in aquatic ecosystems, including lakes and ponds. Thousands of species of blue-green algae have been identified; at least 80 are known to produce toxins that can cause illness and death in animals as well as humans. Heavy growth of these toxin-producing algae (“blooms”) can cause high concentrations of toxins in the water. In North America, Anabaena, Aphanoizomenon, Oscillatoria, and Microcystis are the species of blue-green algae most commonly associated with poisoning.

In central Kentucky, blooms are most common in late summer and early fall, during hot, sunny weather. Contamination of water with excess nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, further encourages algal growth. Common sources of excess nutrients include fertilizer runoff from fields, lawns, and gardens, and direct manure and urine contamination from livestock.

Blooms can produce a blue-green sheen on the water surface, or they can be pea-green and thick, like spilled paint. In addition to blue and green, blooms can also be brown or white. They can form scums, slimes, or mats. It is impossible to tell if a bloom is toxic just by its appearance – ALL blooms should be considered potentially toxic.

Blue-green algae can produce neurotoxins (affecting the nervous system) or hepatotoxins (causing liver damage), and some species can produce both types. Neurotoxins can cause muscle tremors, seizures, excessive salivation, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, and death within hours or even minutes of exposure. Hepatotoxins cause vomiting, diarrhea, bloody or dark stool, and pale or jaundiced (yellow) mucus membranes. Animals can die quickly, or they can develop liver failure over several days.

There are no antidotes for blue-green algae toxins, so early decontamination and supportive care can mean the difference between life and death for an exposed animal. If your pet develops these or any other signs after a recent exposure to water, seek immediate veterinary care. It is important to note that this includes exposure to water with no obvious algal bloom. Toxins can persist in the water for a week or longer after the bloom itself has collapsed.

Preventing blue-green algae poisoning in pets and livestock:

- Provide plentiful clean, clear, fresh water for your animals. Keep water bowls, buckets, and troughs clean and well-maintained.
- NEVER let your pets (or children) swim in, play in, or drink water that is discolored, slimy, scummy, or otherwise suspicious. Assume any bloom is toxic.
- Pay attention to local health and water advisories and respect any water body closures. Water that appears clean can still contain high concentrations of toxins.
- Fence off farm ponds, creeks, and other natural water sources to prevent livestock from contaminating them as well as drinking from them.
- Fence off backyard ponds and other natural water sources to keep pets from accessing them.
- Prevent fertilizer and/or manure from running off into water sources.
- If your pet does access suspicious water, thoroughly wash them with clean, fresh water and prevent them from licking their fur. Wash your own hands and arms after washing your pet, as exposure to blue-green algae can cause skin, eye, nose, and throat irritations in humans.
- If animals become ill after exposure to a pond, lake, or other natural water source, seek immediate veterinary care – even if the water appeared clean, toxins can still be present. Be sure to tell your veterinarian if your animal might have been exposed to blue-green algae. This can help direct treatment, as many other illnesses can have similar signs.

~ Dr. Megan C. Romano, UK VDL

12 Habits of Highly Successful Forage Producers

In a recent series included in Farmers Pride, Dr. Jimmy Henning spelled out 12 habits of highly successful forage producers:

1) Knowing their soil resource
2) Making sound soil fertility decisions
3) Effectively managing tall fescue
4) Having a well distributed water system
5) Balancing forage utilization intensity with animal requirements
6) Having a workable rotational grazing system
7) Use effective establishment practices
8) Have long grazing seasons
9) Manage for clover
10) Understand clover dynamics in pasture
11) Understand the importance of hay testing
12) Invest in themselves.

~ Dr. Jimmy Henning. You can find the full articles by subscribing to The Farmer’s Pride.

Cover Crops Following Corn Silage

Following corn silage harvest, your ground can lay bare for seven to nine months. Instead, let's plant some crops to grow and cover it until next season.

After silage harvest, bare ground has two things working against it. One is exposure to wind and water erosion. And two, it’s not growing anything. Cover crops might help you overcome both problems.

But what should you plant? Well, that depends primarily on what you want to achieve with your cover crop. For example, hairy vetch and winter peas are good cover crops if you want to improve your soil by planting a legume that will produce 30 to 40 pounds of nitrogen per acre for next year’s crop. Or maybe use a deep-rooted radish to breakup some hardpans. (cont. on page 3)

Upcoming Events
(see website for details and online registration)
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
MAR 20 - Novel Tall Fescue Workshop. Lexington, KY.
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**Cover Crops Following Corn Silage**

Are you still hoping for some feed this fall? Then oats, spring triticale and barley, annual ryegrass, and turnips might be better choices because these plants have the greatest forage yield potential yet this fall. Spring oats, triticale, and barley also will die over winter so they won’t interfere with next year’s crop. But, dead residue from these spring cereals is not very durable, so it provides less effective soil protection and for a shorter duration.

For better soil protection, winter rye is the best choice among the cereals. And cereal rye can provide abundant grazable growth early next spring to get cows off of hay sooner. Wheat and triticale also can be good cover crops. Of course, wheat then can be harvested later for grain while triticale makes very good late spring forage.

What is becoming especially popular is planting a mixture of several types of plants to reap some of the cover crops can preserve or even improve your soil, and can be useful forages as well. Consider them following your early harvests. ~ Bruce Anderson, Hay and Forage Grower

**Current USDA Hay Market Prices**

Below are examples of grass prices being paid FOB barn/stack (except for those noted as delivered, which is indicated by a “d” in the table below) for selected states at the end of the day on Friday, August 23. These prices came from USDA and were summarized in E-hay weekly. Large ranges for a particular grade and state are often indicative of location and/or bale size. Subscribe free to E-hay weekly to receive these hay reports on a regular basis (plus Alfalfa hay prices) and other articles. ~ Hay and Forage Grower

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<th>Premium</th>
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**Alfalfa Checkoff Funds Two University of Kentucky Projects.**

Announced July 29th, UK was will be receiving funds for two project in 2019. Dr. Kiersten Wise will be working on Improving Our Understanding of Aphanomyces Root Rot of Alfalfa while Krista Lea (co-editor of forage news) will be updating the “Grazing Alfalfa” publication. See a full list of projects awarded this year at alfalfa.org/CheckoffResearchProjects.php.

**Publication of the Month: Establishing Forage Crops (AGR-64)**

Successful livestock production depends on a forage program that supplies large quantities of quality, homegrown feed. Such forage programs do not develop by chance but are the result of careful planning and detailed attention to establishment, production, and utilization of forage crops. Establishment of a good stand is a first and important step in a successful forage program. The costs of stand establishment are equal to approximately 1 to 2 tons of production. It is important that everything possible is done to ensure success, because a stand failure can nearly double these costs and result in a loss of forage production. In addition, a stand failure exposes soils to more erosion and the loss of valuable topsoil and nutrients. This publication covers the steps vital to the establishment and maintenance of good forage stands. Find this and other forage publications on the UK Forage website and click “Publications”.

**Watch For Fall Army Worm in Pastures**

Fall armyworm is a recurring pest of pastures, and there have been several outbreaks in pastures the past few years. As we move into autumn, risk of fall armyworm moving into Kentucky from southern areas increases. Growers managing pastures should begin watching for early stages of fall armyworm. Pay particular attention to areas where the grass may seem to thin-out or turn brown. Fall armyworm damage may resemble drought stress. Droughty conditions, such as has occurred in August, are favorable for fall armyworm.

Fall armyworm doesn’t survive freezes in winter in Kentucky and must recolonize each year from southern areas in Florida and southern Texas. While there can be 3 or 4 generations in the South, Kentucky typically has only one or two generations. There have been some reports of increasing fall armyworm numbers in states to our south this summer.

There are two strains of fall armyworm, corn strain and rice strain, with important differences in feeding. The corn strain feeds most commonly on corn, sorghum, and cotton. The rice strain prefers rice, alfalfa, grasses in pastures, millet, and vegetables. Unfortunately, these strains are indistinguishable based on appearance.

Scouting: Catching fall armyworm in its early stages greatly reduces damage to pastures and hay. While damage by fall armyworm may appear to happen overnight, feeding by young stages is minimal compared to losses by 5th and 6th instar larvae. Even though time to reach the 5th instar is similar to the time spent as a 5th and 6th instar, these larger larvae consume 10 or more times the amount of food consumed by young stages. As larvae may hide during the hottest part of the day, the best time to scout for fall armyworm in pastures is into late morning or in late afternoon. A sweep net can be used to locate early infestations of fall armyworm. If you find fall armyworm, the next step would be to count the number per square foot. If more than two to three per square foot are found, they should be controlled with an insecticide or the field should be cut. ~ Dr. Ric Bessin, from Kentucky Pest News