

10-2019

Forage News [2019-10]

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Repository Citation

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky, "Forage News [2019-10]" (2019). *Forage News*. 264.

https://uknowledge.uky.edu/forage_news/264

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Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed

Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, editors

October 2019

2019 Heart of America Grazing Conference

Kicking the Hay Habit: Optimizing Profitability



Register now for the 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. Event includes trade fair and silent auction.

7:30 Registration Opens

8:30 **Kicking the Hay Habit** - Jim Gerrish, American GrazingLands Services, LLC

9:30 **Livestock Genetics for Extended Grazing Systems** – Gordon Jones, Red Hill Farms

10:30 **How Many Days to Graze?** - Greg Halich, UK

11:15 **Innovations in Livestock Fencing** - Mark Harris / Sarah Adams, Gallagher

1:00 **Hay Storage and Feeding: Avoiding Train Wrecks** – Jeff Lehmkuhler, UK

1:45 **Summer Stockpiling: Thinking Outside of the Box** – Chris Teutsch, UK

2:15 **Extending Grazing on My Farm** - Producer Speaker

2:45 Forage Research Updates: **Converting High Quality Forage into Baleage** – Jimmy Henning, UK; **Applying KY Dairy Forage Research for Beef Producers** – Ray Smith, UK

3:15 **Practical Considerations for Extended Grazing systems** – Jim Gerrish

The event will be held October 29-30 in Burlington, KY at the Boone County Extension Office. Register before Oct. 15 for discounted price of \$50; <https://2019hoa.eventbrite.com>

Western KY Grazing Conference

Can't make it to the Heart of America Grazing Conference in Burlington? You're in luck, because many of the speakers and vendors will be traveling down to Hopkinsville for the Western KY Grazing Conference on November 1st. Register today at <https://2019WKYGrazingConference.Eventbrite.com>.

Pasture Walk with Jim Gerrish

Join Toby and Debby Dulworth for a pasture walk with Heart of America Grazing Conference keynote speaker Jim Gerrish on November 1st. The event will be at the Dulworth's family farm, Dogwood Farm (2492 S. Kirkman Rd., LaCenter, KY). Registration is \$10 and includes a meal. Register online at <https://wkypasturewalk.eventbrite.com>.

Publication of the Month: Cyanide Poisoning Ruminants (ID-220)

As fall begins, livestock producers should remember that the increasing chance of frost raises the risk some forages have of causing cyanide poisoning in ruminants. Specialists with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture warn that warm-season annual forages, such as sudangrass, johnsongrass, sorghum and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, have the potential to cause cyanide poisoning, especially when grazed by ruminants at an early growth stage or immediately after a non-killing frost. The greatest risk is frosted Johnsongrass. A non-killing frost can occur when temperatures are around 40 degrees and usually affects valleys and low-lying areas first. Wait until plants have died down after frost before grazing.

"These summer annual forages are high-yielding and high-quality forages, said Ray Smith, UK extension forage specialist. "The potential for toxicity problems is low when these forages are properly managed." poisoning should not be confused with nitrate poisoning. Drought and heat can cause nitrate levels in forages to rise, especially in the lower third of the plant. In a year

Forage Timely Tips: October

- ✓ Feed hay to allow cool-season pastures to accumulate forage growth for winter grazing.
- ✓ Do NOT harvest or graze alfalfa fields.
- ✓ Inventory and test each hay lot for nutritive value and consult a nutritionist to design a supplementation program as needed.
- ✓ Remove ruminants from pastures that contain sorghum species (forage sorghums, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, sudangrass, and especially johnsongrass) when frost is expected. Even small patches of johnsongrass that have been frosted can cause prussic acid poisoning.
- ✓ Begin strip grazing early planted small grain and brassicas (turnips and rape) mixes by the end of this month if you've had rain.

like we are experiencing, being knowledgeable of this disorder will help us not make a bad situation worse.

Download the full publication at <https://forages.ca.uky.edu/foragepublications>

Quote of the Month: My Farm Ain't Overstocked, It's Just Under-Rained!

Many forage-livestock producers can relate to the idea of a far sometimes being "under-rained." Lack of adequate soil moisture is one of the major, and most frustrating, factors affecting forage growth, consequently, reducing forage for grazing animals. However, good grazing management can help mitigate effects of limited soil moisture. It is well documented that overgrazing drastically reduces root growth of forage plants. If plants have a shallow and poorly developed root system, drought conditions will reduce growth much more quickly than in plants with root systems that access a larger volume of soil. An extensive root system also allows plants to recover more quickly once it rains. Order your copy of Forage-Livestock Quote and Concepts, vol. 2, today at <https://forages.ca.uky.edu/content/forage-books>

Harvesting Drought Stressed Soybeans for Hay

With much of the country affected by drought conditions this summer, many grain producers are facing the problem of low grain yields while many livestock producers are experiencing hay shortages and may be seeking alternatives for winter feed. One possible option is to harvest drought damaged crops or crop residues that are not usually used as forage for hay or silage.

In Kentucky, drought-stressed soybean crops with low producing grain yields may produce a substantial yield of high quality forage. If harvested in a leafy stage before the leaves start to yellow, soybean hay averages 12-15% protein and 55-60% TDN. Many factors should be taken into consideration before deciding to harvest drought-stressed soybeans for forage. It is important to consider the value of the soybean grain yield versus the forage yield. Understand the feeding quality and nutritive value along with current livestock needs. Pesticides that have been applied to the crop can negatively affect animals. Certain pesticides have no restrictions while others have recommended waiting periods after the last application for safe feeding, and others make the crop unsafe for forage use after any application. Be sure to read pesticide labels before deciding to harvest soybeans crops for forage. Last, soybeans may cause bloat. Mixing rations with grass hay or stockpiled pastures will reduce this risk. Talk to your county agent about the option of harvesting drought-stressed crops for forage.

Harvesting soybean forage for silage is preferred over baling it as dry hay because ensiling retains more dry matter during harvest and storage. However, it is possible to make high quality hay from soybeans in the R3 to R5 growth stages. There are lots of leaves at these stages and the pods are less likely to shatter during mowing and raking operations. Use a roller-type mower conditioner set to lay the hay in a wide swath and leave about 4 inches of stubble. When dry, slowly and gently rake the swath into a windrow in the morning when humidity levels are higher to avoid leaf loss. Invert the windrows after several hours of good drying conditions and bale in the early evening to

avoid further leaf loss. **Make sure to contact your crop insurance adjuster before cutting any drought damaged soybeans.**

There's More Than Cereal Rye for Spring Forage

Cereal rye is the most commonly used small grain for spring forage, but there are plenty of other high-quality options to boost spring inventories. Consider diversifying your spring forages with winter wheat, barley, or triticale to improve harvest timing and winter damage risk.

Jason Hartschuh, an extension educator with The Ohio State University explains in a recent article, the slight differences in each of the small grain forage options. He notes that all the crops have slightly different management but also many similarities.

In the boot stage, barley has a higher NDF digestibility but has lower DM yields. Hartschuh advises to avoid planting barely in wet, sandy, or low fertility soils. Wheat is the most common small grain planted, although often not for forage. Hartschuh notes that forage varieties of wheat exist, but even most grain varieties yield more tons of DM than barley. "It also holds quality into bloom much better than rye, with yields increasing by 50 percent when cut in bloom instead of the boot stage," he explains.

While rye is the most commonly used small grain for forage, it has some issues. It matures the earliest, but then declines rapidly in palatability and quality after the crop reaches the boot stage. Since rye is the most winter hardy, it can be planted in early fall and used for fall grazing. It also pairs well with the timing of corn planting; however, Hartschuh advises to avoid using it as your solo spring forage.

Triticale matures later than rye and the crop's newer varieties are yielding more and better quality forage. It is a combination of wheat and rye and is a good way to stretch harvest in the spring.

Hartschuh notes that rye is an excellent forage but recommends looking into other options to better manage spring harvest time and weather. Each option comes with some downfalls but choosing more than one small grain for spring forage is a good way to better manage harvest timing and diversifies the overall forage inventory. ~ Michaela King, Hay and Forage Grower, (<https://hayandforage.com/article-2673-There%e2%80%99s-more-than-cereal-rye-for-spring-forage.html>)

Upcoming Events

(see website for details and online registration)

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.

FEB 20 - Alfalfa & Stored Forages Conf., Elizabethtown, KY.

MAR 20 - Novel Tall Fescue Workshop. Lexington, KY.

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Bonus Article on Page 3:

Could This Winter Be as Wet as Last? Here's How to Prepare.

see blue.

Could This Winter Be as Wet as Last? Here's How to Prepare

The Old Farmer's Almanac has released their forecast for this winter. "Mild, with soakers" is how Kentucky and Indiana are labeled. I don't put a lot of weight on these forecasts, but they often line up with other forecasts and occasionally are completely correct. If this forecast holds true, I think we all need to prepare for a winter similar to last year.

Most of us bank on dry or frozen ground for grazing stockpiled forage, and especially when you are grazing corn residue and or winter annuals. You don't want compaction, but the wetter it is, the higher the possibility. Roots from cover crops and the freezing and thawing process can relieve some of this, but it does have to freeze to get all the benefits!

So, what can you do to prepare for the possibility of another long, wet muddy winter?

All livestock producers need a contingency plan for both summer and winter. First, look at your animal numbers. My advice is that ten percent of the herd should probably grow some wheels every year. You're probably holding back some replacement heifers to maintain numbers anyway. As the late Gerald Fry would wisely say, "If you cull the ten percent you should be culling, the herd that's left is just that much better." A few open fat cows going down the road reduces winter feed needs and lighter cows will also do slightly less damage to the ground under wet conditions.

Second, just as there is a need for a dry lot in the summer during a drought to protect the pasture, a "winterized" dry lot is needed, especially in wet winters. Winter feeding areas are an absolute must for at least part of the season. Why? Because mud costs money. Livestock burn more energy in mud just by moving around. Increased energy needs increase your feed and feed costs. Feeding efficiently becomes more challenging and losses of hay and feed go up.

For this part of your contingency plan, I highly recommend a rock pad or Heavy Use Area Protection (HUAP) site. A HUAP site can be a huge blessing under wet conditions. After last winter, my wife declared we needed a whole lot more of them! (When you are five feet tall and sink down a foot into the mud, the cows look a whole lot bigger, or so she claims!)

I would much rather be feeding hay out on the pasture, unrolling it to spread out the hooves and nutrients, but when the ground is totally saturated, it's just a muddy mess. I don't like having to deal with the manure and leftovers the next spring, but I also don't like to see pastures torn up and what it creates, which includes a grand opportunity for weeds in the spring.

Hay rings and hay feed wagons work much better on these rock pads. Without HUAP sites, and under wet conditions, the ground quickly becomes a deep mud soup around them and moving them becomes increasingly challenging. Without a pad, it is probably better to not use rings, but then waste goes up extravagantly.

Fence-line feeders surrounded with rock pads are an efficient way to feed all year round. They are usually designed with one side of the slanted feeding panel area open, so you can back in bales without needing to get in with the cows. You can almost feed hay in your Sunday best. You and the tractor stay away from the cows, no gate battling, and if your hay storage is nearby, life is good.

You may qualify for financial assistance to install a HUAP site through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service district conservationist for more information. With or without cost-share, winter feeding pads are a good investment and are pretty simple to build. Locate and build them away from water bodies and where you can have easy access and good drainage and you'll be ready for whatever winter brings.

I really don't want to think about winter yet, but it's best to be prepared. Keep on grazing! ~ Victor Shelton, excerpt from *On Pasture*. For this and more great articles, visit <https://onpasture.com>.