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Forage News [2020-06]

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky

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Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed

Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, editors

June 2020

June 12—Virtual Forage Field Day - 12:00 to 1:00pm Choosing the Best Forage Variety

Plan to attend the upcoming KFGC/UK Virtual Field Day from the comfort of your home. Although we are all looking forward to in-person field days in the near future (hopefully), for now KFGC and UK specialists are working hard to find alternatives to deliver important information. The virtual field day will include a video tour of the UK Forage Variety Test plots managed by Gene Olson. We will show the performance of varieties of tall fescue, orchardgrass, red and white clover, alfalfa and many other forage species. The field day will include presentations by UK specialists on how to choose the best varieties for you farm and your individual hay fields and pastures. To join the field day use the following link: <https://uky.zoom.us/j/6435014290>

USDA Announces Direct Assistance to Farmers Affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced details of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which will provide up to \$16 billion in direct payments to deliver relief to America's farmers and ranchers impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to this direct support to farmers and ranchers, USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box program is partnering with regional and local distributors, whose workforces have been significantly impacted by the closure of many restaurants, hotels, and other food service entities, to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy, and meat and deliver boxes to Americans in need.

Beginning May 26, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), will be accepting applications from agricultural producers who have suffered losses. Eligible commodities include (but not limited to): cattle, lambs, yearlings, hogs and dairy. Read the full bulletin including how to apply and eligible commodities at <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap>.

Four Common Mistakes for Forage Samples

Below are the four most common mistakes made when submitting forage samples to commercial labs.

1. *Not sending the sample in a sealed container*

It is imperative that moisture is not lost from the sample during shipment to the lab. Ziplock bags are provided for sample submission by most laboratories or use your own ziplock freezer bag. It is important to inspect the bag for holes and ensure it is sealed prior to shipment. The dry matter (DM) content of the forage is used to calculate all lab constituents and is essential in calculating correct ration balancing with the forage. Percent DM = 100 - %moisture.

2. *Not including contact information*

If you are submitting a sample to a commercial lab, it is implied that you would like to receive a forage quality report. Many people will mail samples to the lab without enough information and then wonder where their results are. Add address, email, and even include your phone number in case the lab personnel have questions about your sample.

3. *Not indicating which analyses are being requested*

If submitting a feed or forage sample to the laboratory, it is key to let them know what constituents you need to see on your report. If you fail to indicate what the lab needs to do, they will likely assume a basic package, which may or may not include the nutrients you wanted to see on your report. Most labs retain a portion of the sample for a short period of time and they can conduct additional analysis or rerun your sample if you ask.

4. *Not including a description of the forage*

It is important to tell the lab what kind of forage you are submitting. This is especially important if you are planning to have your forage analyzed by near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS). Commercial laboratories have different prediction equations for different types of forage.

In conclusion, proper sample handling is key, and the more information you can give the lab, the better.

~ excerpt of article by Rebecca Kern, Progressive Forage Grower—March 2020. Find the full article at www.progressiveforage.com/ also sign up to receive your free subscription to Progressive Forage Grower.

What Are Festuloliums?

First of all, all of the commercially available Festuloliums are endophyte free so you do not have toxicity issues like with KY-31 tall fescue.

Forage Timely Tips: June

- ✓ Continue hay harvests. Minimize storage losses by storing hay under cover.
- ✓ Clip pastures for weeds and seedheads as needed.
- ✓ Slow rotation allowing for a longer recovery period.
- ✓ Use portable fencing to decrease paddock size and increase paddock number.
- ✓ Do NOT graze below the minimum desired height.
- ✓ When managed, johnsongrass and crabgrass can provide high quality summer forage.
- ✓ Begin grazing native warm-season grasses. Start at 18-20" and stop at 8-10 inches.

Festuloliums are hybrids between various fescues and ryegrasses with higher quality than tall fescue and improved stand survival over perennial ryegrass. The festulolium varieties with tall fescue in their parentage show better survival over the varieties with meadow fescue in their parentage, but often their yield is not as high especially in the first year.

For pasture I tend to recommend the varieties with a tall fescue background. If you were going to overseed every year or two then varieties with Meadow Fescue in their background make more sense. They tend to be slightly more vigorous getting started and have more yield that first year.

Pure tall fescue is my choice for long term pasture, but it is slower to establish. Pure tall fescue is generally less palatable too. That said, a novel endophyte tall fescue is the best choice for long term survival, just be patient with stand establishment and it is generally best to plant in a pure stand where the previous stand has been sprayed out so there's no competition.

For more details on the performance of festulolium varieties read the "2019 Annual and Perennial Ryegrass and Festulolium Report" on the UK Forage Website under Variety Testing.

Grazing Height Matters!!!

Last summer, intern Garrett Hatfield conducted a defoliation experiment that looked at the impact of grazing height and frequency on soil and crown temperature of a tall fescue stand. The results of Garrett's experiment were dramatic.

Garrett clipped the plots to a height of either 1" or 4.5" every week from mid-May to September or monthly to 4.5". The weekly clipping treatments represent what you would expect in a continuously grazed pasture, with the 1" defoliation height representing a high stocking rate and the 4.5 inch defoliation height representing a more moderate stocking rate. The monthly defoliation treatment represented a rotational grazed pasture, where stands are grazed and then rested for 30 days.

The primary objective of this study was to document the impact of the defoliation treatments on the crown and soil temperatures in tall fescue pastures. Increased crown and soil temperatures during the summer months likely stresses cool-season grasses, negatively impacting stand persistence and productivity. Temperatures were documented by installing dataloggers that automatically measured and recorded temperature every 15 minutes.

On hot days, the temperature at the base of the tall fescue plants was more than 10 degrees higher when the stand was clipped to 1" vs. 4.5". Even when averaged over the entire summer, plots that were clipped close had soil temperature about 10 degrees higher.

One of the interesting observations was that after only 4 to 5 weeks of 1" clipping, we saw the composition of the grass stand change from tall fescue to crabgrass. Crabgrass is a summer annual grass that fills in cool-season grass stands as they thin. Now crabgrass is a high quality forage, but it's going to die out after frost and leave patches of bare soil over winter for weeds to grow. Another interesting observation was made this spring. Plots that had been clipped to 1" every week the previous summer, were thinner, weedier

and contained more common white clover. Common white clover can survive under close and frequent defoliation, but its yield potential and drought tolerance is low.

Take Home: From a practical standpoint, the results of this study indicate the importance of 1) not grazing pastures closer than about 4" and 2) resting pastures between grazing events, especially during the summer months. ~ excerpt from Chris Teutsch's column in Cow Country News. See full article at <https://kycattle.org/cowcountrynews.html>

Featured Forage Publication: Alfalfa, Wildlife & the Environment

The updated 32-page publication, *Alfalfa, Wildlife & the Environment*, was recently revised using Alfalfa Checkoff funds administered by the National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance. "It's a good summary of the valuation of alfalfa," said Craig Sheaffer, a University of Minnesota forage agronomist and one of the publication's authors. "Alfalfa is the ideal crop to provide economic return as well as environmental benefits and ecosystem services, and we need to publicize this more. Alfalfa is the ultimate regenerative crop, increasing biodiversity, enriching soils, improving watersheds, and enhancing ecosystems." The publication can be downloaded or purchased at <https://www.alfalfa.org/pdf/alfalfaenvironment2.pdf>

Alfalfa produces its own nitrogen fertilizer by partnering with a soil bacterium to "fix" nitrogen from the air. This nitrogen contribution extends to the following crop, saving farmers thousands of dollars on fertilizer for their corn!

One-third of the honey in the U.S. comes from alfalfa fields.

Alfalfa is considered the premier forage for dairy cows, making it an essential component of milk, yogurt, ice cream, and cheese. Yum!

Protein Power: alfalfa produces more protein per acre than any other crop. This protein is important in the diets of livestock like horses and cattle.

Alfalfa can be used for remediating environmental contamination—most famously, at the "Erin Brockovich" site in Hinkley, CA, where it is used to contain the spread of carcinogenic Chromium-6 in groundwater: alfalfa irrigated with the contaminated water takes up Chromium-6 and converts it to the plant nutrient Chromium-3.

Upcoming Events (see website for details)

JUNE 12-Virtual Field Day: Choosing the Best Forage Variety 12-1:00 Zoom link: <https://uky.zoom.us/j/6435014290>

AUG 6—W. KY KFGC Field Day—Calloway Co.

SEPT 8-9—KY Grazing School, Versailles, KY

OCT 27,28,29—KY Grazing Conferences, Winchester, Elizabethtown and Western KY

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See pg. 3 for bonus article on Protecting Mental Health During Social Distancing

see blue.™

Protecting Mental Health During Social Distancing

People by nature are social creatures. The average person has 12 social interactions per day*. Each interaction creates a risk for spreading COVID-19. Although social distancing is effective at reducing the spread of the virus, the unintended consequences can result in social isolation accompanied by intense feelings of anxiety, fear, loneliness, and depression -- especially for those who reside alone within their residence. Maintaining mental health during these uncertain times is crucial for overall health and well-being. Here are some activities that can reduce worry, anxiety and depression:

1- Limit the amount of pandemic related news and social media that you watch/read. While it is important to stay up-to-date with what is happening, the news will still be there after you take a brain break.

2- Talk to someone about how you are feeling. You would be surprised how many people may be feeling the same way but are too embarrassed to admit it.

3- Stay connected with loved ones, friends or co-workers has been suggested by many mental health experts. In today's age of technology, it is easier than ever to stay physically distanced but socially connected via phone, text, or video chatting. This is also a good time to look up old friends that you have not talked to for sometime. While chatting through technology may not be a perfect substitute for face-to-face interaction, it keeps you connected, contributes to happiness, combats loneliness, and gives you and others a sense of belonging. It can even help to pass time.

4- Be kind. Being socially distant from others does not mean that you cannot practice acts of kindness. Checking in on others and being a source of light for them contributes to a person's sense of purpose and belonging.

5- Enjoy a new book or TV series.

6- Seek warmth. Whether having hot coffee or taking a shower, psychology has taught us that warmth can mimic the sensation of physical touch. Such comfort can provide ease in times of isolation and loneliness.

7- Be active! Exercise contributes to overall physical and mental health, well-being and life quality. Being active can make you feel happier, increase energy levels, reduce risk of chronic diseases, boost brain health and memory, help regulate sleep and relaxation, and can even add years to your life. Going for a walk will not only provide you with fresh air but the sun is also good for your mind and body, and can provide some comforting warmth as well.

8- Maintain a schedule with regular sleep and wake times.

9- Don't be hard on yourself – this is not a time to expect increased amounts of productivity – we are worried and grieving and adjusting – and that takes a lot of emotional energy.

10- Finally, remember that if you are a bit down during the COVID-19 pandemic, it does not mean anything is “wrong” with you. You are doing a vital service with your part in reducing the spread of disease in your community. If you are feeling like you need support call SAMHSA's free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990. They can provide counseling services, information on how to recognize distress, and tips for healthy coping. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours every day at 1-800-273-8255.

Excerpt from article by former UK Pasture Evaluation intern Sydney Biedleman, now on the UK Agriculture Safety Coordination Team.