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Forage News

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Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed

Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, editors

August 2020

Due to budget cuts, the University of Kentucky will no longer be providing funds to mail hard copies of Forage News. This month's newsletter was mailed with the gracious support of the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council. If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, please visit: <https://kyforagenews.com/sign-up/>



The *KENTUCKY*

Forage and Grassland

Western Kentucky Summer Forage Tour Focuses on Forages for Grass Finishing

Note: Social distancing and the use of masks will be required. Registration is limited.

Join us for the 2020 Western Kentucky Summer Forage Tour on August 6 at Palmer Farms Beef, located in Almo, KY. The Palmer's grass finish and retail approximately 40 head of beef cattle per year. Their forage system is based on both cool- and warm-season annual and perennial forages including annual ryegrass and crabgrass, grown in rotation. Palmer Farms is owned and operated by Michael and Stacie Palmer and their three children. Tour stops and topics will include Crabgrass as forage; Annual ryegrass for grazing and silage; Producing and marketing high quality grass finished beef; Increasing productivity with summer annuals; Managing perennial pastures; Endophyte management and Fencing for controlled grazing.

The tour will finish with a meal of GRASS finished hamburgers and hotdogs and a local bluegrass band providing entertainment. The meals will be limited to the maximum number allowed by state mandate. To enhance social distancing, participants will walk the tour route. Limited transportation will be provided for those unable to walk. More details on the tour and registration can be found on the UK Forage Extension Website. Upcoming Events (see website for details)

Quote of Month "You May Delay, But Time Will Not" ~ Benjamin Franklin

Another trait essential for success is timely decision making and timely action. Once a decision has been made, timely implementation often makes a huge difference. One of the countless possible examples is that thistles sprayed with an appropriate herbicide when in the rosette state are less expensive to kill than when the plants are flowering. In fact, delayed action on decisions greatly reduce or eliminate the benefits of improvements or corrective actions. Order your copy of

Forage-Livestock Quote and Concepts, vol. 2, today at <https://forages.ca.uky.edu/content/forage-books>.

UK Part of multi-state, FREE Grass Finished Beef Workshop

Consider joining us for a free, online workshop on Pasture-Finishing Beef, led by Greg Halich at the University of Kentucky, and Ed Rayburn at West Virginia University. Both are extension specialists and producers of grass-finished beef. Designed for intermediate and advanced levels, there will be three two-hour sessions on consecutive evenings. Feel-free to join for those sessions you are most interested in.

Topics include

- Pasture-finished beef production overview
- Forages and Grazing Management
- Cattle selection, supplementation and winter management
- Marketing and processing
- Producer panel
- Frame size X supplementation
- Putting it all together

This event is free, but advanced registration is required at <https://vaforages.org/event/pasture-finished-beef/>.

The Hardest Part is Just Getting Started—Rotational Stocking

Sometimes we make things too complicated! Rotational grazing is a perfect example. I think its important to realize that it is perfectly okay to ease into rotational grazing. Fine tuning your grazing system will come with time. Benefits of rotational stocking include improved pasture growth, nutrient distribution and drought tolerance as well as fewer weeds and better animal handling. Follow Dr. Chris Teutsch and his team as they help a local farmer set up a 4 pasture rotational grazing system in 3 hours. Full article available in Cow Country News. ~ Chris Teutsch, Cow Country News

Watch for Blister Beetles in Hay

Blister beetles are sometimes found in mid-summer cuttings of alfalfa hay and can be toxic if consumed by livestock, especially horses. As few as 5 to 10 of these beetles can be fatal to horses when ingested because of the cantharidin in their hemolymph (insect blood).

Management to minimize blister beetle problems in alfalfa:

- Cut alfalfa at 10% or less bloom
- Manage weeds in and around fields, especially pastures
- Consider cropping practices adjacent to alfalfa. Blister beetles can be abundant in soybeans but are usually absent in corn.
- Do not grow solanaceous crops near alfalfa – both black and striped blister beetles can be abundant in tomatoes and potatoes
- Sample field margins before cutting – blister beetles usually come from field margins and do not tend to move too far beyond the edges of alfalfa fields
- Monitor pastures for grasshoppers. Several blister beetle species develop in grasshopper egg pods. A high grasshopper population can produce high blister beetle numbers the following year.

Read more about blister beetles in the June issue of KY Pest News

~ Ric Bessin, from KY Pest News. Management steps from Lee Townsend.



The red headed blister beetle (left) and margined blister beetle (right) are common species in Kentucky.

Deadline to Apply for USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program is August 28

FSA will accept applications through August 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion in financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

New customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer general assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center. Find contact information for your local office at farmers.gov/cfap.

Featured Forage Publication: “Electric Fencing for Serious Graziers”

Techniques described here are primarily for producers installing one-wire and two-wire fences and permanent power stations using 110-volt energizers. ~ USDA NRCS. This publication can be found on the UK Forage Extension publications page.

[see blue.](#)

Forage Timely Tips: August

- ✓ Do NOT graze cool-season pastures closer than 3 to 4 inches. This will help to conserve soil moisture and to prevent overheating of the crowns.
- ✓ If drought conditions limit pasture growth, close off pastures and feed hay in a sacrifice area.
- ✓ Graze warm season annuals or perennials to allow cool season grasses to recover and to avoid endophyte-infected fescue.
- ✓ After the first good rain in August, seed winter annuals (such as small grains, ryegrass, crimson clover, and brassicas) for late fall and early spring grazing.
- ✓ Plant alfalfa after first good rain in August to allow sufficient size going into winter and reduce potential for sclerotinia damage.
- ✓ Consider renovation of cool-season grass pastures that have thinned.

Understanding producer challenges related to growing alfalfa in the South

A recent network collaboration among land-grant universities in the southern region aims to understand the main challenges farmers face when incorporating alfalfa into forage systems in the south US. This survey targets beef and hay producers that have planted or are interested in establishing alfalfa into their forage systems. The goal is to gather information that will be used to develop more effective research and education programs in the region aiming to improve forage production and farm enterprise sustainability.

We ask for your participation in improving educational programs related to alfalfa by taking the **alfalfa survey**. All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law and should take no more than 10 minutes. Participate in the survey for a chance of win a free bag of alfalfa seeds (worth \$250)! Please click on the link below or use the QR code to access the survey. https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3I80yJOIXUhQzDT

Why My Hay Stands Don't Remain Productive

This is because, as the famous agronomist Ev Thomas says: an accumulation of insults. Very frequent cutting by farms refusing to utilize wide swath means that, as research clearly shows, driving on the field to harvest 5 days after mowing is a 25% yield reduction in the next cutting from crushed regrowth points. Continued on page 3...

Upcoming Events (see website for details)

- AUG 6—W. KY KFGC Field Day—Almo, KY
- AUG 11-13—Pasture Finished Beef Production Workshop, Online
- SEPT 8-9—KY Grazing School, Versailles, KY
- OCT 16—Pasture Walk with Greg Brann, Adolphus, KY
- OCT 27,28,29—KY Grazing Conferences, Winchester, Elizabethtown and Western KY
- FEB 25—Alfalfa and Stored Forages Conference, Bowling Green, KY

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Bonus Content:

Why My Hay Stands Don't Remain Productive (continued from page 2).

To make sure the alfalfa doesn't grow we spread manure several days or weeks after that and further crush the regrowth points that did make it. Tire strips of weeds increasingly occupy more of the field. Add to that the late harvests in a desperate attempt to get the maximum amount out of the crop exposes the crop crown to the full impact of winter and ice sheets. But wait!! We aren't finished with the insults yet. With the low prices stockyard beef price and low milk prices, we have completely forgotten liming – yet spend bazillion (agronomic technical term) dollars for the latest genetic alfalfa that still will not grow in low pH. The stress of low pH and the wet soils of the past three years has overwhelmed the disease resistance built into the crop and the plants are dying out. This is especially true on marginal soils where it was iffy to plant alfalfa any way – but if you are a real farmer you are supposed to grow just corn and alfalfa. I am not trying to dump on already stressed farmers. Just pointing out the reality of much of our present forage production and how it takes the legs out of the profitability for which you worked so hard and keeps you from achieving the potentially more profitable high forage diets. Are we expecting the impossible? Note: this article was written for alfalfa fields in New York, but has application for any hay field. ~ excerpt from Thomas Kilcer, Crop Soil News, June 2020

Depends on Harvest Intervals

In a recent study published in Crop, Forage, and Turfgrass Management, researchers investigated the effect of harvest intervals on the persistence of alfalfa, either as a monoculture or mixed with grasses. Four harvest intervals were imposed on all species combinations.

The team found that longer alfalfa harvest intervals in the south-eastern U.S. resulted in positive outcomes. They also observed that growing alfalfa in mixtures with tall fescue resulted in the greatest forage mass and nutritive value. The results from this study suggest that harvesting alfalfa at 42-day intervals produces the maximum amount of alfalfa productivity and persistence.

Adapted from Quinby, M.P., Nave, R.L.G., Bates, G.E., & McIntosh, D. (2020). Harvest interval effects on persistence and productivity of alfalfa grown as a monoculture or in mixtures in the southeastern U.S. Crop, Forage & Turfgrass Management, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cft2.20018>

The Miracle Fall Forage Crop

In 1930, there were nearly 40 million acres of oats harvested for grain in the United States. By contrast, the 2017 Census of Agriculture pegged harvested oat acres at just over 800,000. That is the definition of a drop in popularity.

Although we'll never reach the 40 million mark again, oats have undergone an impressive makeover as a relatively high-quality, high-yielding fall forage crop for the north and central latitudes of the U.S. and a winter crop in the South. Yes, it's too early to start planting now, but it's not too early to start planning for the additional fall forage that oats can provide.

Read the full article in the July issue of Hay and Forage Grower ~ Mike Rankin, Hay and Forage Grower, July 2020