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UK Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed

Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, editors

January 2022

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UK Rises above tornado aftermath

In the midst of utter destruction caused by the Dec. 11 tornado outbreak, University of Kentucky employees continue to press on, offering help where and when their fellow Kentuckians need it the most.

The UK Research and Education Center in Princeton took a direct hit from the powerful tornado that began in northwestern Arkansas and carved a path of destruction across the western half of Kentucky. UKREC employees, led by director Carrie Knott, have worked tirelessly over the last three weeks.

“Our hometown heroes of hope—our faculty, staff and Extension agents in our Western Kentucky communities have rallied to assist others even as we were dealing with damages to critical UK facilities in Western Kentucky,” said UK President Eli Capilouto. “As the University for Kentucky, we understand how important faculty and staff at the UK Research and Education Center and Cooperative Extension Service are to relaying educational information to their communities. We are committed to rebuilding, helping the area recover and emerging stronger than before.”

“The center is the home to a group of very dedicated UK employees, and I commend Dr. Knott and her staff for their heroic recovery efforts,” said Nancy Cox, dean of the UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and UK vice president for land-grant engagement. “While the center won’t be the same for some time, the college is committed to helping our employees and communities

recover from these devastating events and serving the Western Kentucky agricultural community.”

While the physical structure that housed the UKREC is temporarily gone, the center has been, and always will be, vital to Kentucky agriculture. “The outpouring of community support has been very humbling to us,” Knott said. “We are not closing our doors, but we will look a little different and be a little more fragmented at least for the near future.”

The center was established in 1925 on nearly 1,300 acres about one mile from downtown Princeton. In 1980, the Rottgering-Kuegel Agricultural and Extension Building was added and housed the center’s nearly 50 staff and hosted countless extension and area meetings. That facility underwent a major renovation and addition to house the UK Grain and Forage Center of Excellence, which opened in 2019. Since its inception, numerous stakeholders have provided strong support to the center and critical funding for many of its improvements.

“The Kentucky agricultural community is a strong community. It is a kind community, and it is a generous community,” said Chad Lee, director of the Grain and Forage Center of Excellence. “We are going to rely heavily on them to help us get through this as we work to build anew. Our hearts are broken but not our spirits.”

Over the years, scientists at the center have spearheaded many important research endeavors including numerous no-till research projects, precision agriculture, forage variety testing, and a soil fragipan research breakthrough. Center specialists have been the area farmers’ go-to resource for research-based information in agronomics, forages, beef management, disease control, pest control, precision agriculture, grain storage systems, soil fertility and grain marketing.

If you wish to make monetary donations to tornado victims, donate locally or to UK’s Office of Philanthropy at <https://uky.networkforgood.com/causes/9900-cafe-annual-discretionary-fund>. ~ Katie Pratt

41st Kentucky Alfalfa and Stored Forages Conference—February 24, 2022

Please join the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council and University of Kentucky for the 41st Annual Kentucky Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference on Thursday, February 24th in Bowling Green at the Warren County Extension Office. This year’s theme is Conserving High Quality Forage as Baleage. Topics include:

- The biology of silage fermentation and additives, Chris Teutsch, UK

- Species and variety options for baleage, Ray Smith, UK
- Harvest timing and moisture determination, Jimmy Henning and Ben Connor, UK
- Mowing and conditioning for baleage: Equipment adjustment and management, Jessica Williamson, AGCO
- Alfalfa insect update, Lee Townsend, UK
- Optimizing quality with bale density and time of wrapping, Jessica Williamson, AGCO
- Round bale silage: Farmer results in Kentucky, Jimmy Henning, UK
- Baled silage panel: Making high quality baleage, Jessica Williamson, AGCO, and Craig Cohron, producer

Other highlights include company exhibits, silent auction, awards and lunch. Early registration is just \$35 and ends February 17th. Sponsorship opportunities are all so available.

Pub of the Month: 2021 Long-term Summary report for UK Forage Variety Trials

Results are out for the 2021 Forage Variety Trials. Side by side comparisons of yield and persistence can be found for many forage species including tall fescue, annual grasses, clovers, alfalfa, ryegrass, timothy, KY bluegrass, orchardgrass and many summer annual grasses. Select species are also evaluated for persistence and preference under cattle and horse grazing. The 2021 Long-Term Summary of Kentucky Forage Variety Trials contains a summary of all species for the last 15 years. This report and individual species reports can be found on the UK Forage Variety Trials tab on the UK Forage Website.

Bale-Grazing at it's best

Greg Halich is an economist by trade. Halich's day job is performed at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, but by nights and weekends he raises grass-fed beef cattle. He considers himself a slightly above average rotational grazer, mostly limited by time, but if you really want to get him excited, just ask what he thinks of winter bale grazing and be prepared to spend some time listening.

Through trial and error, Halich has been fine-tuning a system for bale grazing in the humid upper South where winters are more often characterized by rain, mud, and ice rather than frozen ground and snow. This necessitates a far different management scheme than where bale grazing was initially perfected in the upper Great Plains and Canada.

"With bale grazing, you can cut your winter tractor use by 90% and improve the fertility and production of pastures without spending one cent on commercial fertilizer," asserted Halich, who has been bale grazing his cattle for over a decade.

Halich admitted that unrolling hay on pastures in the winter is another effective means of feeding cattle in the winter and distributing nutrients, but it also comes with some disadvantages. The primary two are high amounts of hay waste and the need to start and run tractors every day. There is also the potential for tractor ruts when conditions are wet.

Forage Timely Tips: January

- ✓ Begin utilizing stockpiled pastures. Graze pastures with orchardgrass and clovers first. Save tall fescue pastures for late winter grazing.
- ✓ Using polywire, strip graze stockpiled pastures to improve utilization. Start at the water source and allocate enough forage to for 2-3 days. Back fencing is not necessary.
- ✓ Make plans to frost seed red and white clover onto closely grazed tall fescue pastures by mid-Feb.
- ✓ Some hay can be fed as stockpiled grass is grazed to stretch out the grazing season.
- ✓ Begin hay feeding as stockpiled forage is used up.
- ✓ Supplement hay as needed.
- ✓ Minimize waste by utilizing ring feeders.

For those thinking about bale grazing, Halich recommended that about one-third of the needed winter hay be staged out in the pasture during late fall — before wet weather arrives. They need to be placed where they will be fed. After a few of years of experience, most of the bales can be placed in pastures prior to winter. Grazing begins closest to the water source with a hot wire between the first and second feeding paddock and another between the second and third paddocks in case there is a breach of the first wire. This is a similar approach to stockpiled fescue strip grazing, only with bales. Halich also highly recommended using hay rings to minimize waste; these can easily be rolled to the next feeding of bales when cattle are moved.

When planning a bale grazing system, Halich likes to work in terms of tons of hay per acre. "The biggest mistake you can make when starting to bale graze is to feed hay out at high densities," he said. "I recommend starting at about 2 tons of hay per acre. That's about four or five bales per acre, and this will help minimize and localize the amount of pugging that will take place in your pastures. We can't do it the way that they do it in the North where the ground is frozen for 3-4 months," he noted.

One of the strategies that has worked well for bale grazers is to combine stockpiled tall fescue with bale grazing. This offers improved nutrition potential as the cattle consume both the high-quality stockpiled forage along with the hay. **Continued on page 3.**

Upcoming Events (see Forage website for details and to register, click on EVENTS)

JAN 9-11—AFGC Conference, Wichita, KS

JAN 14—Forages at KCA, Lexington

Feb. 21—Pastures Please! Equine Program, Lexington

Feb 24—Kentucky Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference, Bowling Green, KY

Subscribe or access full articles at the UK Forage Website www.forages.ca.uky.edu. Go to the forage website to access the "KY Forages YouTube Channel" for recordings of recent conferences including the fall KY Grazing Conference.

Continued: Bale-Grazing at it's best

When a heavy rain event occurs, Halich said there will be some damage around the hay ring, or what he calls the impact zone. "These areas can easily be reseeded by hand in the spring, and they will come back quickly because there's a lot of fertility around the bales. On my farm, I use a mixture of forage chicory and plantain, which help break up any compaction, along with annual lespedeza, Italian ryegrass, clovers, and orchardgrass. Depending on where you are, you'll have to experiment a little to see what works best," he added.

Halich noted that many of the bale grazers he has worked with have noted how much cleaner the cattle are compared to when they drylotted their animals. "This results in better overall herd health," Halich said. "Cattle will always have a fresh spot where they can lie down."

In concluding, Halich said that bale grazing may not be for everyone, but for those who are willing to make it work, bale grazing is a low-cost and labor-saving method to overwinter beef animals . . . even in the Fescue Belt's wet winters.

Article excerpted from Hay and Forage Grower article Dec. 7, 2021 "He's a bale-grazing disciple." For the full article see <https://hayandforage.com/article-3744-he's-a-bale-grazing-disciple.html>

Not your Grandfather's Alfalfa

Register now for the second episode of the Alfalfa Livestream series!

January 6, 2022 at 11a.m. CST. Tune in as industry specialists talk about why alfalfa deserves more respect as a field crop and protein source. Topics for this session will include: Managing for yield or quality: How to know what makes you the most profit; Alfalfa – The best source of protein for the Dairy cow; and Previous crop herbicides: Are they impacting alfalfa establishment? Register here: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/40548209282716941?source=Archive+eBlast>

The first webinar in the series from December is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETUHKVg_eXg

USDA Hay Markets—December 14

The USDA table for examples of grass prices being paid FOB barn/stack (except for those noted as delivered, which are indicated by a "d" in the table below) for selected states in mid-December. Large ranges for a particular grade and state are often indicative of location and/or bale size. Also check the [USDA Hay Market Prices](#) for additional locations and more detailed information.



Grass hay prices reported to USDA from selected states.			
Location	Forage Quality Grade		
	Premium	Good	Fair
	-----\$ per ton-----		
Alabama	110-340	67-110	40-70
California	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colorado	270	N/A	N/A
Idaho	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iowa	170-200	140-170	135
Kansas	120-140	60(d)-185(d)	55(d)-65
Minnesota	150-230	140-205	105-165
Missouri	140	80-100	60
Montana	360	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	90(d)-130(d)	75-90	N/A
Oregon	N/A	280	N/A
Pennsylvania	220-370	105-295	70-155
South Dakota	160-165	135-150	125-150
Texas	160-330	120-275	120-235
Washington	320-345	320	185(d)
Wyoming	N/A	N/A	N/A