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UK Forage News

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

December 2022

Pub of the Month: Extending grazing and reducing stored feed needs AGR-199

In my opinion this is one of the best publications that we have on our website. There are many benefits of extending the grazing season. Just one of the benefits highlighted in this publication is how extending the grazing season generally lower expenses. Stored feed is almost always two to three times more expensive per animal or per day than pasture. In livestock budgets, stored feed typically accounts for 25% or more of the cost of production, and producer records often reveal it to be higher. The quantity of stored feed required is one of the best indicators of profitability for a livestock operation. In general, the less hay needed, the more cost-efficient the operation. Find this and related publications at the UK Forage Website under the "Grazing" tab. <https://forages.ca.uky.edu/grazing>

USDA Hay Markets—November 29, 2022

Hay prices are at historic highs in many regions. Most producers in KY have said that they are still able to find hay for purchase but the prices are increasing. We expect that as the winter progresses it will be hard to find decent quality hay at a reasonable price. If you think you may need more hay for this winter, then securing that hay now is a good idea. Or at least make sure that the hay you have is stored properly and that you feed with methods that reduce waste. Below are examples of

Forage Timely Tips: December

- ✓ 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 since pastures are not regrowing this time of the year.
- ✓ Make plans to frost seed red and white clover onto closely grazed tall fescue pastures in February. Seed supplies of improved varieties may be tight.
- ✓ Begin hay feeding as stockpiled forage is used up.
- ✓ Supplement hay with commodity feeds as needed.
- ✓ Minimizing waste by utilizing ring feeders.

alfalfa and 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 at the end of the day on November 25. 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. Note: there are no prices for KY since we have very few hay auctions in the state. ~Taken from the summary compiled by Hay and Forage Grower. <https://hayandforage.com/>

Grass hay prices reported to USDA from selected states.			
Location	Forage Quality Grade		
	Premium	Good	Fair
-----\$ per ton-----			
Alabama	130-328	76-113	N/A
California	300-350	210-300	N/A
Colorado	N/A	N/A	N/A
Idaho	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iowa	208-240	155-195	150
Kansas	140-225	100-200	150
Minnesota	115-220	90-175	75-155
Missouri	175	125-150	100
Montana	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	N/A	200-210	125-175
Oklahoma	150-225	125-150	N/A
Oregon	400-425	330	200
Pennsylvania	265-370	190-260	125-190
South Dakota	165-200	150-180	140-150
Texas	240-330	130-275	120-235
Washington	N/A	N/A	175
Wyoming	N/A	N/A	N/A

Alfalfa hay prices reported to USDA from selected states.			
Location	Forage Quality Grade		
	Premium+	Good	Fair
-----\$ per ton-----			
California	315-475(d)	380	235
Colorado	300-325	300	N/A
Idaho	N/A	275-280	N/A
Iowa	210-260	200	N/A
Kansas	228-355(d)	175-320	230(d)-290(d)
Minnesota	180-235	155-235	140-195
Missouri	180-300	150-180	125-150
Montana	250	250	225
Nebraska	270-300	190-230	N/A
Oklahoma	225-280(d)	N/A	N/A
Oregon	350-425	325-350	235
Pennsylvania	350	240-320	250
South Dakota	230-260	220	200
Texas	330(d)-450(d)	280(d)-330(d)	N/A
Washington	360	360	250
Wisconsin	225	130-170	N/A
Wyoming	240-300	210-260	N/A

Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference

Plan to attend the annual Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference at the Cave City Convention Center February 21 next year. As in past years, we have an excellent lineup of speakers and topics. They include:

- National Producer and Consumer Survey: Increasing Alfalfa Hay Sales to Horse Owners-Krista Lea
- Hay Production in the Deep South: Bermudagrass and Alfalfa-A Perfect Combination-Jennifer Tucker
- Options for Hay Mechanization: Producer Perspective-Dennis Wright
- Hay Mechanization: Industry Overview-Noah Pendry
- One Big Idea that has Helped Improve My Haying Operation-Winners of the SE Kentucky Hay Contest
- Update on Options for managing thinning alfalfa stands-Jimmy Henning

International Grassland Congress-May 14-19, 2023

Make plans to attend the IGC Congress that is being held in the US for only the third time since the meeting started in 1927. It is May 14-19, 2023 and will be held in northern KY. This international congress is only held every four years and gathers together forage leaders from over 60 countries to present the latest developments in forage and grassland production. Go to the website for more information and to register. Also review the outstanding Pre-Congress tours that are being offered. <https://internationalgrasslands.org/2023-igc/>

Time for an Alfalfa Gut Check

Since 2005, there has been about a 30% drop off in harvested alfalfa acres for states that report both hay and haylage acres. Some states, such as California, have experienced a much larger drop (48%). It's ironic that this is occurring when alfalfa's value has never been higher.

The cause for the steady decline in alfalfa popularity can't be pinned on one thing or entity. Lack of water in the West, larger dairy farms with a heavier reliance on corn silage, more profitable commodity alternatives that are supported by government programs, and the recent interest to substitute annual forages for alfalfa have all been cited among the reasons for fewer alfalfa acres.

Although the trendline for alfalfa is undeniable, there are also reasons for optimism and may be even more justification why things could or should change. Perhaps part of alfalfa's problem is simply familiarity and the fact we have taken it and its benefits for granted. Alfalfa still remains the dominant perennial forage crop in many regions of the United States and ranks as the third or fourth most valuable crop grown in the U.S., only behind corn, soybean, and sometimes wheat.

Corn silage as a prominent feature in dairy rations is not going away. Yield and energy rule the day; plus, marketers get to sell seed every year. Fortunately, alfalfa makes a perfect complement for the annual crop. This was recently confirmed in some Miner Institute research that found alfalfa included in the dairy ration at 30% to 50% of the forage fed optimized overall cow performance.

Alfalfa's agronomic and environmental benefits have always been undervalued and underappreciated. Perhaps the recent run of high fertilizer prices might bring greater attention to the legume's ability to supply nitrogen. Currently, the value of the

nitrogen supplied per acre by a terminated alfalfa crop is, in most cases, equal to or greater than the cost originally invested in top-end alfalfa seed.

Most of the alfalfa grown in the U.S. is found in the Western states. There's no question that water availability is limiting this production and will continue to do so in the future.

In the Southeast U.S., alfalfa is finding a role as the comeback player. After years as a no-show, both researchers and producers are finding that alfalfa offers a good complement when seeded into warm-season perennial grass fields. In the Southeast, it appears that alfalfa acres are on the rise.

There's no question that the alfalfa industry's infrastructure has been downsized. That trend will continue, at least in the short-run, but alfalfa still generates billions of dollars of net revenues for growers while keeping tons of soil from eroding every year. Alfalfa also helps to sequester carbon in the soil. ~ excerpted from Mike Rankin's article in Hay and Forage Grower

Seed Harvest Update from the Pacific Northwest

Much of the US forage seed production acreage is in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Therefore this recent report from DLF, a major international seed company, provides important information for those us that are buying grass and legume seed.

The US forage seed harvest in 2022 was highly variable. It ended a bit below expectations, but still a very welcome recovery from the dismal 2021. A dry winter was followed by an extended wet spring that raised many expectations of high yields across the Pacific Northwest seed production regions. In the end, however, most yields were not much different than long-term averages.

Tall fescue: Of the major crops, tall fescue was the most disappointing. Poor yields are mostly thought to be the fault of cool, wet conditions that caused a very long pollination window. A long flowering period means a long ripening period resulting in no real "right-time" to harvest. Planting this fall was difficult, especially non-irrigated acres. Of concern to all is the lack of recovery and fall growth which will likely limit seed production next year.

Orchardgrass: Yields were well below normal. Orchardgrass is the first of our seed crops to ripen and the extended, late spring caused poor seed-set. Orchardgrass acres continue to decline.

Red clover: Not a lot of this crop has been cleaned yet, but yields seem to be average to just above. New fields have yet to germinate and will struggle to establish which may affect production in coming years.

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

January 8-10—AFGC Conference, Winston-Salem, NC

January 25—Horse/Tall Fescue Workshop, Lexington

February 21, 2023—KY Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference, Cave City, KY

February 20-21—Heart of America Grazing Conference, Ferdinand, Indiana

May 14-19, 2023—International Grassland Congress, Covington, KY

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