



FORAGE NEWS

For more forage information, visit our UK Forage Extension Website at: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage>

February 2009

Garry D. Lacefield and S. Ray Smith, Extension Forage Specialists • Christi Forsythe, Secretary

29TH ALFALFA CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 19

The 29th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference will be held February 19 at the Cave City Convention Center. This conference truly has something for everyone interested in alfalfa. In addition to top speakers representing producers, universities and industry, from three states, we will have a "full-house" of exhibitors, silent auction, and our annual awards program. Registration is \$15.00 (students \$5.00) to be paid at the door. It is not necessary to pre-register. The registration fee includes proceedings and other printed materials, delicious meal and coffee breaks. CCA credits will be available. Program for the day includes:

- 8:00 am Registration, Visit Exhibits, Silent Auction
- 8:45 Welcome
- 9:00 Art and Science of Haymaking – Garry Lacefield
- 9:15 RFV vs RFQ – Which is better? – Tom Keene
- 9:30 Alfalfa Seed Price and Seeding Rate: Impact on Production Cost – Ray Smith
- 9:45 Alfalfa Hay for Horses: Myths vs. Reality – Laurie Lawrence
- 10:00 Break, Visit Exhibits, Silent Auction
- 10:30 Alfalfa as a Grazing Crop – Bill Payne
- 11:00 Keys to Success with Alfalfa Balage – Dennis Hancock
- 11:30 Roundup Ready Alfalfa and Future GMO's in Alfalfa – Dennis Gehler
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 12:45 Alfalfa Awards Program and Silent Auction Results
- 1:00 Cost and Return of Alfalfa Hay Production – Kenny Burdine
- 1:45 How I Produce and Market Alfalfa Hay – Clayton Gerald
- 2:00 Blue Ribbon Alfalfa Panel – All Speakers
- 3:00 Adjourn

For more information, contact Garry Lacefield – 270-365-7541, Ext. 202 glacefie@uky.edu or Christi Forsythe – 270-365-7541, Ext. 221 cforsyth@uky.edu or visit our website at www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage

ENTER YOUR HAY AND WIN

The American Forage and Grassland Council will be holding their Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As with every conference they will be sponsoring a "hay contest" and you can enter and win. Rules of the contest can be found at

<http://www.afgc.org/mc/page.do?sitePagelId=39937>. All the information you need to submit a sample for the contest is listed there.

In the past, Kentucky has had several class winners as well as "The Best in Show" winner. So we know for a fact that "Kentucky hay" can compete with other states when it comes to producing high quality hay. Winners of each class as well as Best in Show receive cash prizes of up to \$500.00. Entry deadline is April 3, 2009. Why not enter today and WIN!!!! You do not need to be present at the conference to win. (Tom Keene, Extension UK Hay Marketing Specialist)

FORAGES AT KCA PROCEEDINGS

We had record attendance at the 14th Forages at KCA Symposium Friday, January 9 in Lexington. My thanks to Barry Drury, Bret Winsett, Jon Doran and Ray Smith for their excellent presentations. My apologies to those who arrived late and did not get a proceedings. For the first time in 14 years, we didn't print enough. For all of you, as well as anyone who could not attend, the proceedings are now posted on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ProceedingsPage.htm>

TEFF VARIETIES

This past year, Teff variety trials were conducted at Lexington and Princeton. Nine varieties were included in both trials. Yields ranged from 2.83 to 3.44 ton/acre at Princeton and 1.33-1.83 ton/acre at Lexington. Yield was reduced at both locations because of drought, but more severe at Lexington. Detailed reports are available on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ForageVarietyTrials2.htm>

SMALL GRAIN AND CORN SILAGE VARIETY TEST REPORTS ADDED TO FORAGE WEBSITE

The 2008 Kentucky Small Grain Variety Test performance test also includes yield date for forage and straw. This report, along with the 2008 Kentucky Silage Corn Hybrid Performance Report has been added to our Forage Variety website <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ForageVarietyTrials2.htm>.

UREASE INHIBITORS

When urea fertilizers are applied to the soil, an enzyme called urease begins their conversion to ammonia gas. If this conversion takes place below the soil surface, the ammonia is almost instantaneously converted to NH₄-N which is bound to soil particles. If the conversion takes place on the soil surface or on surface residues, there is a potential for the ammonia gas to escape back into the atmosphere in a process called *ammonia volatilization*.

Volatilization losses depend on the environmental conditions at the time of application. Soil temperature, soil moisture, amount of surface residue, soil pH, and length of time between application and the first rain event or irrigation are all factors that determine the total amount of N that could be lost via volatilization. Nitrogen losses from fertilizer applied prior to May 1 are generally very low. After May 1, N loss is greatest, especially when urea is surface-applied to soils with high residue or vegetation (i.e., no-till corn or pastures), during warm, wet weather followed by a warm, breezy drying period.

Volatilization losses can be substantially reduced if a urease inhibitor is used with the fertilizer. The most common urease inhibitor is NBPT (N-[n-butyl] thiophosphoric triamide) sold under the trade name Agrotain®. Urease inhibitors reduce the activity of the urease enzyme for up to 14 days. As long as it rains during this 14-day period, the urea will be moved

into the soil where it can be converted to NH₄-N without the risk of volatilization.

Dry Matter Yields of Fescue as Affected by N Source and Urea Inhibitor (NBPT)

N Treatments	Fescue Yields*	
	% of AN	Ton/ac
Check (No N)	43	1.04
AN	100	2.43
Urea	87	2.12
Urea + NBPT	99	2.40
UAN	84	2.04
UAN + NBPT	87	2.11

*Sum of two cuttings per year with 70 lb N/ac cutting averaged over 5 years.

(SOURCE: Dr. Lloyd Murdock and Dr. Greg Schwab, UK Extension Soils Specialists)

HAY STOCKS DROP SLIGHTLY

Almost as much hay was stored on U.S. farms going into this winter as at the start of the previous one, despite fewer acres harvested in 2008. More hay was on hand at the start of the growing season, plus yields were up in much of the country. Those factors apparently offset the acreage reduction and higher summertime usage, resulting in Dec. 1 hay stocks that were less than 1% lower than the year-earlier amount.

In its Jan. 12 Crop Production report, USDA estimated Dec. 1, 2008, hay stocks at 103.6 million tons, down from 104 million tons on Dec. 1, 2007. Stocks increased in most areas east of the Mississippi River and portions of the Southwest and declined in Rocky Mountain and northern Great Plains states. The biggest declines were in Texas and Oklahoma, down 37% and 25%, respectively.

May 1, 2008, hay stocks totaled 21.6 million tons, up from 15 million tons on that date in 2007. Disappearance of hay from May to December last year was put at 63.6 million tons compared with 57.8 million during the same period the previous year.

USDA's final estimate of the 2008 hay crop shows production of alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures at 69.6 million tons, down from 72.6 million tons in 2007. Acreage, estimated at 20.98 million, was down from 21.67 million the previous year, but the 3.32-ton/acre average yield was up almost a ton. Production of other hay totaled 76 million tons, down from 77.7 million tons in 2007. The average yield was 1.95 tons/acre from 39 million acres harvested. (SOURCE: eHay Weekly, January 13, 2009)

IS SAINFOIN RIGHT FOR YOU

It's happening again. Just like last year we are seeing advertisements for a wonder legume called sainfoin, claiming it's better than alfalfa. Well, stay tuned for the rest of the story.

Maybe you've seen or heard the claims – better than alfalfa, a 200 RFV from bud to bloom, easy to establish, more palatable. These characteristics, and more, are being claimed in advertisements by marketers of a legume called sainfoin. Sounds great, doesn't it, but what's the rest of the story.

Sainfoin, which has been nicknamed 'the poor man's alfalfa', has several good characteristics. Its main advantage is its bloat-free characteristic, making it grazing-friendly. It also tolerates low phosphorus and high pH soils well, but it hates acid, wet, or salty soils. It produces very palatable hay or grazing, and compared to alfalfa, forage quality declines less rapidly as the plant matures.

However, in almost all areas where alfalfa is well-adapted, sainfoin does not yield as well. It does begin spring growth very fast, frequently out-yielding alfalfa at first harvest, but sainfoin regrows very slowly. Nitrogen fixation also can be a major problem for sainfoin, even when properly inoculated with the right kind of bacteria. As a result, nitrogen fertilizer often is needed to maintain productivity. Even then, sainfoin is susceptible to root and crown rot diseases that can quickly shorten stand life.

In my opinion, sainfoin is most suitable for areas that usually get just spring grazing or only one hay cutting per year, especially if soils are calcareous.

For most other uses, though, alfalfa and other traditional forages probably will outperform sainfoin. (SOURCE: Dr. Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist, University of Nebraska)

PLAN TO ATTEND 2009 AFGC CONFERENCE

The 2009 American Forage and Grassland Council annual conference will be held June 21-23 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Not only will you be able to compare notes and get new ideas from forage producers around the country, but the conference will feature presentations from leading forage professionals. A highlight of the conference is hearing producers from around the country in the Forage Spokesperson Contest as they overview their successful forage enterprises. Clayton Geraldts will represent Kentucky this year. For more information or to register check out www.afgc.org and click "Conferences" under the "Program & Services" tab. Contact Ray Smith directly if you would like a hardcopy registration form mailed to you 859-257-3358.

AMERICAN GRASSFED ASSOCIATION TO HOLD 6TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The American Grassfed Association (AGA) will hold its sixth annual conference, February 5-7 in Lexington, KY. Keynote speaker for this conference will be the noted author and sustainable agriculture statesman, Wendell Berry. The conference is hosted in part by the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, and the Kentucky Dept. of Agriculture.

"We are pleased to roll out the AGA certification program at this conference in concert with Animal Welfare Approved, who will be doing our on farm third party audits at no charge for our AGA members." said Dr. Patricia Whisnant, President of AGA, and a Missouri Grassfed Beef producer and Processor and DVM, "The conference is aimed at our producers, and all users and supporters of grassfed products. We welcome producers, professionals, chefs, all food service professionals and anyone else interested in the Grassfed industry and products to attend this conference."

Also addressing the AGA conference will be Dr. Lee Meyer, UK Dept. of Ag. Economics, who will map strategies for economic success in alternative ranching practices.

Other speakers include Julius Reuchel, author of the acclaimed book, *Grass-fed Cattle*, who will explain the basic ingredients of a successful beef grass-finishing program, how those ingredients must work together as a system, and how to develop a comprehensive grass-finishing plan. Julius will also be on hand for book signings, as will Mr. Berry, and we will have copies of their books for sale at the conference.

Jay Wenther, Exec. Dir. of the American Association of Meat Processors will teach a class on how to speak the processors language.

Chad Pawlak of Grasspoint Farms will lead a session on "turning Grass into Cheese."

Charles Ritch, Board member from American Pastured Poultry Producers Association, on poultry production and the KY Mobile Processing Unit.

Jeanette Beranger from American Livestock Breed Conservancy will speak on Heritage Breeds and Grass Production.

Dr. Lauren Gwin, AGA Secretary will be updating us on the latest from the government. (SOURCE: Carrie Balkcom, Executive Director, AGA)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- FEB 19 29th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City Convention Center
- JUN 21-24 American Forage & Grassland Council, Grand Rapids, MI
- JUN 27 UK Equine Field Day, UK Maine Chance/Spindletop Research Farm, Lexington
- JUL 23 UK All Commodity Field Day, Research & Education Center, Princeton
- SEP 17-19 National Hay Association Annual Conference, Deadwood, SD



Garry D. Lacefield
Extension Forage Specialist
February 2009