



# FORAGE NEWS

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## February 2015

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

### 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY KENTUCKY ALFALFA CONFERENCE

Keynote speakers and Kentucky farmers featured at the 35<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference to be held February 26, 2015 at the Cave City Convention Center. Dr. Peter Ballerstedt, back by popular demand, will speak on the important topic "Red Meat, Our Health and Alfalfa – Separating Scientific Fact from Opinion, Policy, Politics and Bureaucracy". Dr. Don Ball, world renowned Forage Specialist from Auburn University, will speak on "Alfalfa and the Environment". The program will conclude with five top – award winning farmers discussing "What Hay Quality Means to Me". We will have a full house in the Exhibit Hall and our largest silent auction. Registration is \$15.00 (\$5.00 students). No advanced registration is required. The program will begin at 8:00 a.m. CDT.

- 8:00 Registration, visit exhibits and silent auction
- 8:45 Welcome – Garry Lacefield
- 9:00 35 Years – Garry Lacefield
- 9:15 Alfalfa is our Family Farming Operation - Myron Ellis
- 10:00 What's Required to Break the "beef per acre" Kentucky Record – Ken Johnson
- 10:15 Grazing Alfalfa: Real Cost of "Fear" of Bloat – Ray Smith
- 10:30 Break
- 11:10 Red Meat, Our Health and Alfalfa – Separating Scientific Fact from Opinions, Policy, Politics, and Bureaucracy –Peter Ballerstedt
- 12:00 Lunch, Awards (Hay, Hay Contest, Alfalfa)
- 1:00 Silent Auction Results
- 1:30 Alfalfa and the Environment – Don Ball
- 2:00 Hay Quality: What is it? – Garry Lacefield
- 2:15 Farmer Panel – What Hay Quality Means to ME:
  - Clayton Geraldts
  - Ben Cox
  - John McCoy
  - Dennis Wright
  - Minos or Glenn Cox
- 3:30 Final Comments and Adjourn – Garry Lacefield

### FORAGES AT KCA

My thanks to all who participated in the 20<sup>th</sup> Forages at KCA program during our Kentucky Cattlemen's Convention in Owensboro January 16 & 17. It was a great time of good food, great friends and fellowship. Our forage producers – Clayton Geraldts, Bill Payne, Jason Tower, Chris Pantle and Russell Hackley did a great job addressing the topic: "My top FIVE forage improvements/practices". I am also most appreciative to Dr. Don Ball, Professor Emeritus, for attending and providing complimentary – autographed copies of his newest book "Forage Quotes and Concepts". I want to say a very special THANK YOU to Carrie, Dave, Becky, Steve and all who made my banquet surprise so special. It was an enjoyable,

emotional experience with the video and all the kind words. Thanks again and best wishes for continued growth in KCA and our Kentucky forage-beef industry.

### UPCOMING KFGC BOARD MEETING AND GARRY'S RETIREMENT

As secretary of KFGC I want to remind all Board members of our meeting at the Cave City Convention Center from 1:00 to 3:00 February 25. **We will also be hosting the Retirement Celebration for Dr. Garry Lacefield that evening at 6:00pm. If you are interested in attending Garry's retirement celebration contact me at [raysmith1@uky.edu](mailto:raysmith1@uky.edu) or phone 859-257-1953.** And don't forget to attend the 35<sup>th</sup> KY Alfalfa Conference February 26 at the same location. Ray Smith, KFGC Secretary

### KENTUCKY WELL REPRESENTED AT AFGC MEETINGS

The American Forage and Grassland Council annual meeting was held in St. Louis Jan 11-13, 2015. The meetings were very successful with over 250 people in attendance and many KFGC members made the trip to Missouri. Our own Dr. Ray Smith presided over the meetings as AFGC President. One of the highlights of the meeting was the presentation of The Distinguished Grasslander Award to Garry Lacefield. This award goes to individuals who have shown outstanding leadership to the forage industry throughout their career and Garry definitely has. The National Forage Spokesperson is once again a Kentuckian with Heather Graham from Wolfe County winning this year's contest over the 5 other contestants from around the country and Canada. Congratulations Heather! Clayton Geraldts, Hart county hay producer, was an invited speaker at the conference. Lindsay Slaughter, a UK PhD student, placed second in the Emerging Scientist competition. Steve Clary continued Kentucky's winning tradition in the hay contest and Kentucky entrants placed well in the photo contest. Will Bowling had the winning photo in the Open category and in the Grazing category. Jennifer Johnson had the top photo in the Education division. Will also had the Best Overall photo in the entire competition, based on over 25 entries from across the country. We encourage other Kentuckians to submit entries to the photo contest during 2015. All photo contest winners will be displayed on a revolving basis at the AFGC website ([www.afgc.org](http://www.afgc.org)) throughout 2015.

### NATIONAL FORAGE & GRASSLAND FOUNDATION

Dr. Ray Smith, Forage Specialist at the University of Kentucky was elected secretary of the Forage & Grassland Foundation during their annual meeting in St. Louis, MO. Congratulations Ray!!!

## KENTUCKY BEEF CATTLE MARKET UPDATE

December was not the most friendly of months for feeder cattle markets as most contracts dropped considerably leading up to the Christmas holiday. Several limit down days were seen, leaving many to wonder how far the market would drop before finding a bottom. The CME actually expanded daily limits on feeder cattle futures contracts last month. However, at the time of this writing, markets have gained back a portion of what was lost. Due to the Christmas holiday, tracking local markets is more challenging, but it appeared that the drop in futures had much more impact on heavy feeders than on calves.

Next month, we will discuss the January cattle inventory report in detail and have a better feel for what is likely occurring with respect to expansion across the US. Cow slaughter continues to run well below year-ago levels, down by more than 850,000 through November. This alone leads me to continue to expect a slightly larger estimate for beef cow numbers for 2015 and a slightly larger calf crop.

Given price levels and weather, I also have to believe that increased heifer retention will be ongoing in many areas. Given the constraints on expansion that exist in Kentucky, I do not expect major changes in heifer development numbers across the Commonwealth. I would expect the largest growth in heifer development to occur in the Southern and Northern Plains. Drought forced many producers in the Southern Plains to greatly reduce beef cow numbers since 2011. Expansion had actually begun in the Northern Plains, but was likely cut short by the massive blizzard in the fall of 2013.

While one can certainly debate how long the current strong market will hold and what the next few years will bring with respect to prices, everyone can agree that 2014 was an incredible year for cow-calf operators. Further, fundamentals would suggest that while prices may decline some over the next couple years, most cow-calf operations will enjoy historically strong profit levels in the intermediate future. These increased returns provide a great opportunity for cow-calf operators to invest in their operations in multiple ways.

While expansion is certainly an opportunity that makes sense for many producers, I always caution producers that their cost of production is just as important as expected prices levels when one considers growing the size of their cow herd. Another option for producers is to use the current profit levels to invest in things that reduce their costs or otherwise allow them to increase their profitability per head. Possible cost reducing investments are improved forage programs, working facilities, hay storage and feeding methods, and many others. The cow-calf business is a long term venture and part of taking advantage of a strong market is making investments that improve profitability in weaker markets. (SOURCE: Dr. Kenny Burdine, Livestock Marketing Specialist, University of Kentucky)

## ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN ROUNDUP READY ALFALFA VARIETIES?

During our winter meetings, we receive many questions about forage varieties. A frequent question is: Are there differences in Roundup Ready Alfalfa Varieties? The answer is yes. Mr. Gene Olsen, U.K. Forage Variety Test coordinator established 15 RR varieties in Lexington in 2012. He has taken yields during 2013 and 2014. With two years of data to date, he found a range of 9.80 to 12.42 ton per acre (2.52 difference). There was no significant difference over the two years in the top yielding six varieties. Data will continue to be taken in 2015 and beyond. Several RR varieties were included in the 2011 spring seeding at Princeton with a similar range of difference. See our Forage Variety Results 2014 Alfalfa Report on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ForageVarietyTrials2.htm>

## CHOOSE CLOVER VARIETIES WISELY

Choosing the right clover varieties for your 2015 pasture renovation program is an important step toward success. The "better" varieties can yield more and live longer. Each year the University of Kentucky Variety Testing program tests red and white clover varieties at multiple locations in the state. Results from those tests are available at each County Extension Office and on our website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ForageVarietyTrials2.htm>

## VALUE OF LEGUMES IN PASTURES

Legumes have always played an important role in Kentucky pasture and hay fields; however, with cattle prices at an all time high and the need for "quality" equally high, we need more legumes in 2015. We are all aware putting legumes such as clovers in our grass dominant pastures can improve yield, quality, summer production and take advantage of those unique plants to furnish nitrogen. Over the years, many stocker grazing studies have been conducted at Auburn University. Under the leadership of Dr. Don Ball, a detailed summary of thirty grazing studies has been completed. A summary (see table) shows that eight of the top ten involved legumes. A copy of this publication is on our website <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/STOCKER%20CATTLE%20PU B-%20ANR-1348.pdf>

Ten Lowest Calculated Pasture Costs/lb of Gain.				
Pasture type	Grazing days	ADG	Pasture cost/ac	Pasture cost/lb
Tall Fescue w/Ladino	205	1.53	\$172.26	\$0.30
Orchardgrass w/Ladino	238	1.62	\$172.08	\$0.30
Tall Fescue w/Birdsfoot	194	1.51	\$173.38	\$0.44
Bermudgrass w/Vetch	161	1.29	\$230.75	\$0.47
Sericea Lespedeza	139	1.87	\$148.84	\$0.49
Sericea Lespedeza	139	1.65	\$148.84	\$0.54
Sericea Lespedeza	139	1.39	\$148.84	\$0.60
Rye & Ryegrass	153	1.36	\$318.34	\$0.60
Bermudagrass w/Rye	161	1.30	\$328.35	\$0.62
Rye, Oats & Crimson Clover	121	1.37	\$352.78	\$0.65

Ball, D.M. and W. Prevatt, Stocker Cattle Performance and Calculated Pasture Costs, Auburn University, ANR-1348, June 2009.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- FEB 7 2015 Kentucky Small Ruminant Grazing Conference, Logan County Extension Office, Russellville, KY
- FEB 26 35<sup>th</sup> "Anniversary" Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City Convention Center, Cave City, KY



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