COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT, LEXINGTON, KY 40546

FORAGE NEWS

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

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We want to personally thank all of you for the support and encouragement we received after the April issue of Forage News. We will strive to bring you the latest forage information and timely updates each month just as Garry and Christi did for the last 36 years.

Issues with Wet Baleage

If you are making baleage (round bale silage) this spring make sure to read the article by our UK Extension Veterinarian Dr. Michelle Arnold "Wrapping your Hay this Spring? Inadequate fermentation may lead to Health Risks." Link to the article in the UK Beef Newsletter "Off the Hoof" www.uky.edu/Projects/BeefIRM/downloads/**offthehoof**apr15.pdf.

Dr. Arnold tells us that the simple goal of ensiling is making sure the forage is properly preserved. Anaerobic bacteria (those that live without air) convert sugars to lactic acid which in turn lowers the pH and preserves the forage as silage. The main management principles governing any type of silage production include: 1) start with high-quality forage harvested at the proper growth stage, 2) manage the moisture content, 3) eliminate air and 4) maintain the package integrity until feed-out. Round bale silage (or "baleage") is an alternative to baling dry hay that allows shorter curing time and saves valuable nutrients by avoiding rain damage, harvest delays, spontaneous heating and weathering. However, if not done properly, inadequate fermentation can lead to botulism or listeriosis, both potentially fatal conditions in cattle. For more detail on the how to make quality baleage go to the UK Forage Website under publication and then Silage/Baleage and read "Baleage: Frequently Asked Questions."

Time To Cut Hay

May is typically the ideal time to make first cutting hay here in Kentucky. Whether it's tall fescue, orchardgrass, alfalfa or a mixed grass legume stand, aim to cut your hay in May for high quality.

Normally, the first week to ten days of the month provide us the right maturity of these forage species to make and produce top quality hay to feed our livestock. Unfortunately, Mother Nature often doesn't cooperate with nice four to six day weather patterns that allow us to get in the field, get the hay cut, tedded, raked, baled and off the field before another rain approaches.

Starting that first week of May, it is important to watch weather forecasts constantly in hopes of finding that good pattern. However, if the weather does push you later into the month, keep a constant vigil so that as soon as possible you can start making hay.

See the tables on page 157 of the new 5th Edition of Southern Forages for more details on when to cut hay to maximize forage quality. Tom Keene

New Forage Options from the Nobel Foundation

As I fly back from the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, OK, I cannot help but think about all I learn each time I visit this world class forage research and extension institution. This visit was no exception. I learned that the breeding of new small grain varieties has the potential to create new options for extending the grazing season in Kentucky and surrounding states. A variety that should have immediate application in the state is Maton II cereal rye. Recent tests have shown it can produce 50% more fall growth than the standard cereal rye Elbon, providing high quality and productive grazing throughout the fall. The Noble Foundation has also recently released new varieties of winter oats, triticale, and forage type wheat. For more information go to www.noble.org.

Fear of Bloat Costs More Than Bloat Itself

This is a quote from a new book by Drs. Don Ball, Garry Lacefield, Vivian Allen, Carl Hoveland and Joe Bouton. What they are referring to by this quote is that the many advantages of legumes almost always outweigh the risk of bloat. Legumes increase pasture yield, improve forage quality, increase animal performance, lengthen the grazing season and provide free nitrogen through N fixation. When proper management is exercised to minimize bloat hazard, the economic advantages of legumes make their use well worth the effort. The UK publication "Managing Legume Induced Bloat in Cattle ID-186" http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id186/id186.pdf by Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler states that no management practices will guarantee that bloat doesn't occur, but following these strategies can reduce its incidence:

- Grow grass-legume mixtures instead of pure legumes.
- Avoid grazing very immature white clover or alfalfa. Research shows alfalfa grazed less than 10 inches tall had two times more bloat than when it is grazed at 19 inches.
- Put animals on lush legume pastures only when plants are free of surface moisture (dew or rain).
- Provide a full feeding of hay before turning animals into lush legume stands for the first time.
- Although bloat is associated with certain plants, some animals have a genetic predisposition to bloat, so you should cull chronic bloaters.

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• Do not remove animals from pasture during first signs of bloat. Continuous grazing results in less incidence of bloat than removal and return.
• Provide access to water and minerals.
• Observe animals closely following any abrupt change in the weather.
• Feed bloat-reducing compounds.

By practices these strategies, you will greatly reduce the risk of bloat and insure "fear of bloat" does not reduce the economic profitability of your livestock operation. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of "Forage-Livestock Quotes and Concepts" you can order one for $5 from Arleen Smith at arsmith@email.uky.edu.

Be An Advocate for Cooperative Extension in KY

Many of you may have read my article in Cow Country News in March about supporting Cooperative Extension, but I think it is worth repeating a few key points. I am thankful for our strong state and county extension programs in Kentucky. I am thankful for the many new extension offices and multiple agents in most counties. Our extension program is strong because of the support from producers around the state. If we don't continue to advocate for extension on the local and the state level then our extension programs will gradually decrease as it has in many states.

I spent some time a year half ago looking at extension in New Zealand and Australia. In both those countries they have pretty well eliminated public extension programs. The dairy sector in New Zealand has adjusted well and their check off program funds extension consultants for dairy producers. But beef and sheep producers have very little support. They can hire consultants, but it's expensive for the average producer to pay for the type of advice they were previously getting from public extension. Let's make sure we are proactive in our support of extension in Kentucky to make sure our programs remain strong.

New Method to Determine Harvest Hay Harvest Date

As reported in a recent newsletter from Thomas Kilcer in New York, Cornell researchers have developed a simple technique to determine when to cut alfalfa hay fields or field containing alfalfa/grass mixtures. The height of alfalfa can predict when it and grass fields, in your local climate and individual field, should be cut. Drs. Jerry and Debbie Cherney of Cornell developed this practical, accurate system that can be found on the web at http://www.forages.org/index.php/tools-grassman. For the Alfalfa-Grass estimator (Figure 1), you insert the alfalfa height, percent grass, NDF target, and the weather (normal, hot, cool) and it will tell you how many days until that field on your farm under your conditions is at peak quality for harvest. For example: If the alfalfa is 12 inches tall, the stand contains 50% grass, and the target NDF is 45, un-der normal weather it will be 13.5 days to harvest. If the weather switches to hot, then you have 11.5 days to harvest.

Using Electric Fence to Improve Pastures

For some of us, the use of electric fence is second nature, but for those unaccustomed to it, becoming familiar with it can be a daunting task. However electric fence is an inexpensive and temporary tool that can be used to improve pasture management and utilization. Temporary electric fence provides an easy way to develop a rotational grazing system or keep animals out of an area for herbicide application or seeding. Keys to successful electric fence instillation includes having the right equipment (posts, wire/tape, charger, ground rods, etc.), setting the system up to be user friendly, and managing the fence and animals to reduce the likelihood of injury. Finally, a good electric fence is visible, checked frequently and always on. For an in-depth look at installation of temporary electric fence, see UK's "Rotational Grazing" publication, found at http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id143/id143.pdf.

Krista Lea

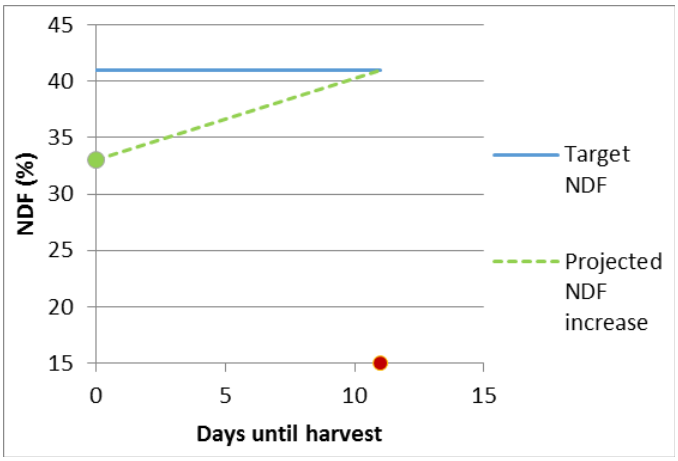

Figure 1. Alfalfa was 20.5 inches tall in a stand with 25% grass. Target NDF was 41 and with nor-mal weather it would be 11 days to harvest. Tom's complete newsletter can be found at http://www.advancedagsys.com/.

Grazing News: Warm Season Grazing

Cody Smith, our KY Master Grazer coordinator, has published two excellent articles in the latest issue of "Grazing News" about grazing Green Corn and grazing Warm Season annual grasses. These articles are available at the UK Master Grazer website (http://www2.ca.uky.edu/grazer/) and explain how these summer annual grazing options can greatly extend the grazing season with a very high quality feed.

Soybean Hulls to Reduce Fescue Toxicity

In a new video on the Master Grazer website (http://www2.ca.uky.edu/grazer/) Dr. Glen Aiken of the USDA-ARS in Lexington explains how feeding 5lbs/day soybean hulls can reduce the symptoms of fescue toxicosis and improve cattle weight gains by as much as 25 to 30%. The direct link to the video is http://video.ca.uky.edu/videos/video/642/.

Upcoming Events ***(google "KY Forages" for details)***

MAY 20-21 Kentucky Grazing School, Woodford County Extension Office. Versailles, KY.
JUNE 2 Equine Farm and Facilities Expo. Lexington, KY
JUNE 16 Equine Farm and Facilities Expo. Murray, KY
JUNE 21-27 National Forage Week.
SEPT 9-10 Heart of America Grazing Conference. Wilmington OH.
NOV 20-24 International Grassland Congress. New Delhi, India.
DEC 13-16 National Grazing Lands Coalition Conference (GLCI). Grapevine, TX.

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JAN 10-12 American Forage and Grassland Council Annual Meeting. Baton Rouge, LA.