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Forage News [2022-11]

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky

Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed
Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, editors
November 2022

KY Fall Grazing Conference videos available now

We had an outstanding KY Grazing Conference last week with close to 300 attending the two locations. If you didn't get a chance to attend or want to share the presentations, recordings of each speaker's presentation is available at the KYForages YouTube Channel. The proceedings of the conference is also available on the UK Forage Extension website. Simply google "KY Forages YouTube to reach the site or use the direct link below. https://www.youtube.com/c/KYForages/videos

KY Forage and Grassland Council Awards

We are pleased to announce the following Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council award winners for 2022. Thank-you to each of these individuals who have provided tremendous support to the forage industry, forage producers and KFGC for many years.
State Public Service: Dr. Chris Teutsch
County Public Service: Nick Roy
Industry Award: Jody Watson
Producer "Grassroots" Award: Cody Rakes

KFGC Forage Spokesperson

We had excellent presentations by our two KY Forage Spokesperson contestants at Grazing Conference last week; Dwight Lesile of Robertson County and Bart Hamilton of Braken County. Recordings of their presentations are now available on the KY Forages YouTube channel. Congratulations to Bart Hamilton for being the 2022 Forage Spokesperson for Kentucky. Bart will represent KFGC at the national Forage Spokesperson contest January 8-10 at the AFGC Annual meeting in Winston-Salem, NC. Plan to attend this conference and support Bart. Plus you'll learn from producers and researchers from around the country.

International Grassland Congress in KY May 2023

The International Grassland Congress (IGC) meets every four years to highlight new research findings and discoveries in forage and grassland agriculture from around the world. May 14-19, 2023, the IGC will meet in Covington, Kentucky. This is only the third time in the past 100 years the conference will be held in the U.S. To decide if attending this congress may be helpful to you, we polled Kentucky producers and extension agents that attended the IGC in 2013 in Australia.

What was your motivation behind attending IGC?

A: My motivation for attending was an opportunity to understand grassland production methods and challenges existing around the world. —*John Litkenhus, producer, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky*

A: Excited to see a new part of the world, and more particularly the forage systems for that area. I love to learn and expand my base of knowledge, so I knew that the opportunity would exist to do just that with researchers and farmers from around the world. —*Todd Clark, producer, Lexington, Kentucky*

A: I wanted to see how the rest of the world farms. —*Buddy Smith, producer, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky*

How has what you learned at IGC impacted your operation?

LITKENHUS: My operation was probably not changed directly from what I learned at the conference, but indirectly, seeing the different approaches and operations in Australia and other countries motivated me to be significantly more attentive to overgrazing, rotational grazing and forage utilization.

JOHNSON: As an extension agent, it helped me get past the textbook knowledge and be more open to new ideas. An example, I had a farm manager client who mentioned using dung beetles to utilize manure in pasture to improve nutrient availability/cycling. I had no point of reference for that practice at the time. I was surprised to hear that farmers in other countries have used this technique as well. —Traci Johnson, extension agent, La Grange, Kentucky

Forage Timely Tips: November

- ✓ Apply 30-50 lb nitrogen per acre to strengthen cool -season grass pastures and grass hay fields.
- ✓ If not already done, inventory hay supplies and assess hay quality. Hay prices are increasing.
- ✓ Using a grazing stick or rising plate meter, estimate stockpile forage available for winter grazing.
- ✓ Adjust animal numbers or purchase additional hay to balance forage-feed supply to livestock needs.
- ✓ Graze crop residues and cover crops that are 6-8 inches tall and are well anchored. Do NOT graze closer to 4 inches.
- ✓ Graze winter annuals that will not overwinter such as brassicas and spring oats.
- ✓ Alkaloid content in tall fescue can also be high in the fall some years, but will begin decline after a hard freeze (low 20's).
- ✓ Talk to local NRCS conservationists about a grazing plan and cost-share opportunities.

CLARK: We grass-finish beef, and I got a lot of system-type ideas from producers in Australia. Adapting a grazing system from a dry country to a higher rainfall region has its benefits, even in a small way.
SMITH: I tried planting radishes and other things as cover crops as grazing for late fall and part of the winter the year that I returned, like they were doing in Australia. The full article was printed in the October issue of Progressive Forage~ Joy Hendrix
Sign-up to receive your free print or online issue of this magazine. https://www.agproud.com

Pub of the Month: Commercially Available Novel-Endophyte Tall Fescue Varieties

This newly released publication compares available novel endophyte tall fescue varieties and describes the benefits of novel varieties in comparison to KY-31. Written by NC State researchers, it is the most comprehensive article on this subject ever published. Traits for comparison include time to maturity, leaf type and how each variety was developed. Find the full publication and others at the UK Forage Website under the "Forage Species" tab. https://forages.ca.uky.edu/species

Fescue Foot Can Flare in Cold Weather

The symptoms of a bad case of fescue toxicity are well-documented. One symptom — fescue foot — can become more apparent when temperatures drop during the winter. "As the cold weather moves in, you are likely to notice some cows or yearlings on fescue pastures may be slow-moving early in the day," notes Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with the Univ. of Missouri. "This might be an early warning sign of fescue foot," he adds.

Toxic alkaloids in Kentucky 31 tall fescue cause the restriction of blood vessels. The animals' extremities are especially susceptible to restricted blood flow such as ears, tails, and feet. Calves can lose the tips of their ears or switches from their tails which lowers market value.

"For affected cows, producers may notice slight swelling in the rear ankles and possible breaks in the skin from the top of the hoof to up above the dew claw," Cole notes. "Early detection of limping is key. By the time hooves on hind feet show red, gangrene may have set in." If a limping animal is detected, Cole suggests putting it in a chute and checking its lower leg. "If the animal's leg feels cooler than the rest of the leg, move the affected animals from that toxic pasture and dry lot them or at least put them on a different pasture," Cole recommends. The colder extremity is the result of a lack of blood flow.

Don't graze toxic fescue pastures too short. Research shows that toxins stay in the lower 2 inches of the fescue plant during the fall. Intensive rotational grazing with frequent movement of cattle will help ensure plants are not grazed too short. Consider feeding stored hay during late fall and early winter cold spells. Toxin levels in stockpiled fescue pastures decline over time. Grazing these pastures in mid- to late winter is rarely a concern.

Cows that develop fescue foot have difficulty walking or grazing, which drastically impacts performance. While there is no cure for the condition, preventative measures such as planting a novel endophyte tall fescue variety can essentially eliminate the problem. Other strategies are also available for mitigating the disease, such as including legumes into a toxic tall fescue pasture. ~ Mike Rankin, Hay and Forage Grower. Subscribe today to receive a free online or print copy of this magazine. https://hayandforage.com

Sometimes we just don't know

There seems to be a lot of questions coming in recently that we just don't have exact answers to. While extension specialists accept that 'I don't know' may be the most appropriate answer we still want to eventually provide a better answer.

I guess one of the benefits that come with age is to know there really is no perfect answer to certain questions. Here are a few I have been getting lately.

"My pasture has a _____ (little, some, a lot) of johnsongrass and we got a light frost. It is tall and kind of dried up, and I really don't think they will eat a lot of it. We are expecting a harder freeze in a day or two. Do you think it is safe to leave the cows out there?"

I have exaggerated this question some, but not much. I am happy that producers recognize that frosted johnsongrass will produce cyanide (prussic acid) and animals that consume a lot of it can be killed. What makes this question so difficult is that we really don't know how much of what stage of johnsongrass leaf will cause a fatality. We do know that young and very tender growth is very toxic, but how much of that do they need to eat to be fatal. Another unknown is how fast prussic acid is released when plants are frosted.

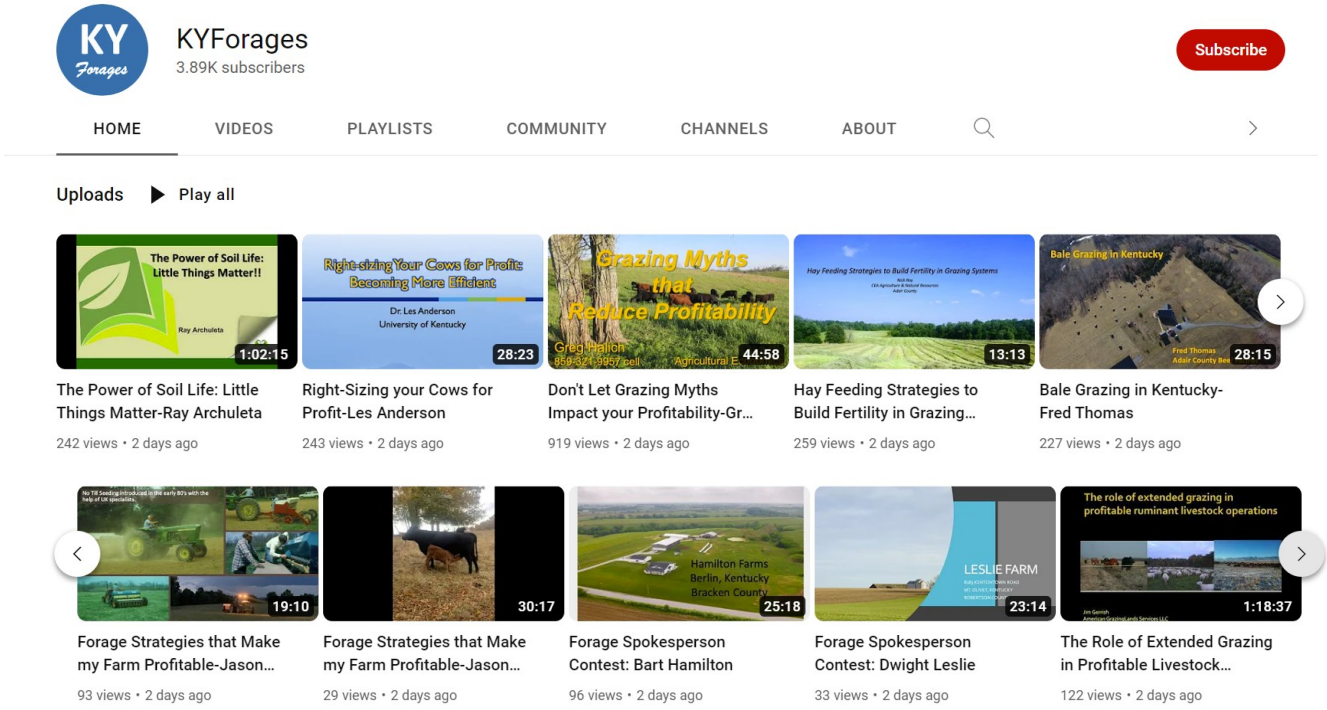
So how do I answer this? First, I say that I don't think anyone can give them a definitive answer. Second, I say it is mainly about the amount of risk they are willing to accept. Usually, I explain that if I was their farm manager, then grazing frosted johnsongrass before it's all the way dried up is just too much risk.

"I planted some _____ (pick your grass) in mid-September and I have not had a rain on it. Do you think I am ok still?" This one is tough, because I really WANT to be able to tell them that everything will be alright. I have to say that no one knows. In 2019, I was advising a farm that was seeding over 200 acres of orchardgrass, a good bit of it on a prepared seedbed. They had a good seedbed and seeded on time (late August). Then we had a month of very hot and dry conditions before rain came. The orchardgrass did come up, but stayed small all winter. Even though I sure wanted it to survive, an extreme winter would have hurt it pretty bad. Thankfully, the winter was mild and the orchardgrass survived.

My point here is that for seedings made in dry conditions, success is mostly determined by the weather. We will just have to wait and see. I hate giving that answer but that's the truth. ~ Jimmy Henning Farmers Pride

Upcoming Events (see Forage website for details and to register, click on EVENTS)
Nov 14-17—World Alfalfa Conference, San Diego, CA
Jan. 8-10—AFGC Conference, Winston-Salem, NC
Feb. 21, 2023—KY Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference, Cave City, KY
May 14-19, 2023—International Grassland Congress, Covington, KY
Subscribe or access full articles at the UK Forage Website www.forages.ca.uky.edu.

Here are the videos from the recent KY Grazing Conferences. Google "KY Forages YouTube." Go to playlists to see recorded presentations from KY and VA Forage Conferences over the last 8 years.



Photos from the KY Grazing Conference