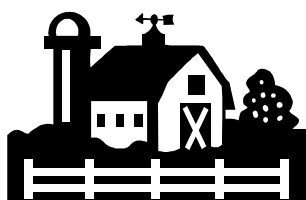


GREEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE NEWS

**August
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**Green County
Cooperative Extension
Service**

**106 S. Public Square
Greensburg, KY 42743**

**Telephone:
(270) 932-5311**

**Fax:
(270) 932-4390**

**Email:
bnewman@uky.edu**

**Website:
[http://ces.ca.uky.edu/
green/](http://ces.ca.uky.edu/green/)**

Brian S. Newman

Brian S. Newman,
County Extension Agent
for Agriculture &
Natural Resources

Green County Field Day

The Green County Agricultural Field Day will be held at 5:30 P.M. C.T. on September 2, at the Anne and Eddie Durham Farm located at the end of R Durham Road, right outside of Greensburg on highway 68. There will be a lot of opportunities made available at the meeting. A teff forage research plot will be showcased. Dr. Ray Smith from the University of Kentucky, Ms. Kimberly Fields with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, and Ms. Saralyne Hite from Pfizer animal health will be the featured speakers of the event. The department of agriculture will have the hay testing van onsite to do free hay analysis for anyone interested in having their hay tested. More info to come.

Stockpiling forages for fall and winter pasture

Many cattle producers can take advantage of late summer and early fall growing conditions to obtain high quality pasture for late fall and early winter grazing. This practice is called stockpiling. The best grasses for stockpiling are cool-season grasses because they will retain good quality and palatability into winter. Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue are two good grasses most suitable for stockpiling under our growing conditions. Late July and in August are the best times to begin stockpiling for fall and winter use. The basic steps include removing cattle from the pasture, applying the necessary fertilizer and allowing grass to accumulate growth until November or December. Make sure to remove summer growth to 3 to 4 inches by grazing or clipping so stockpile production comes from new grass growth. You should get a soil test to determine if you need to add phosphorous, potassium or lime. Growers also need to top-dress at a rate of 40 to 60 pounds of nitrogen per acre on bluegrass and 40 to 100 pounds on tall fescue before August 15. Research results have shown following these guidelines can increase dry matter production by 20 and 25 pounds per acre for each pound of nitrogen applied to bluegrass and tall fescue, respectively. The source of nitrogen you use is important. Ammonium nitrate is the most efficient fertilizer to use when stockpiling because it is not subject to volatilization. However, ammonium nitrate is becoming more difficult to find, and it may be cost prohibitive. Research has shown that urea is about 79 to 89 percent as effective as ammonium nitrate, but urea can be just as effective as well if you use an urease inhibitor. To maximize stockpiled forage use, be sure to graze the grass-legume fields quickly after the first frost. Pure grass stands will maintain palatability and quality much longer into the winter so you should graze these last. Also, you need to maintain a high stocking rate to prevent waste as a result of trampling. In this time of high costs, stockpiling cool-season grasses extends the grazing season, reduces winter hay feeding, provides a good return of high quality forage for each pound of nitrogen applied and provides your cowherd an ideal place for wintering and calving.

USDA Livestock Risk Protection Program

The USDA Livestock Insurance Protection Program first became available in late 2007. It's a program that can help cow-calf and stocker operations manage risks related to calf prices – basically it compensates farmers if prices fall below a specified, insured level.

In the past, livestock producers could use forward contracts available through order buyers or futures contracts available through the Chicago Mercantile Exchange; however, only the largest producers could generally use these routes. The new program allows virtually any operation, regardless of size, to establish a risk management program to help protect against falling feeder prices.

Insurance payouts are based on the CME Feeder Cattle Index. Producers are insured at a certain dollar level they specify on this index. If the Feeder Cattle Index drops below the insured level at the contract expiration, producers will receive compensation.

For example, if you were insuring a 700-pound steer at the \$110-level and the index fell to \$105/cwt, you would receive an insurance payment of \$35 per steer.

Producers may choose from multiple insurance levels; higher levels obviously will cost you more. Livestock producers really need to balance increased protection with the additional cost of premiums, and it's important to understand that payments are based on the Feeder Cattle Index and not actual local prices. Generally, local prices are lower than this index. You may purchase this coverage through most crop insurance agents. The minimum contract lengths are 13 months, and they are sold in four-week increments. You may sell up to 30 days prior to the contract expiration and anytime after, but payments are based on the index at the expiration date. So, there is a fair amount of flexibility in terms of actual coverage length desired by the producer.

Timely Tips

The best advice for this month is to be sure that cattle have plenty of shade, mineral supplementation, fly control, good pasture in addition to good water. Nursing calves should continue to gain during this “summer slump”.

Spring-Calving Cow Herd

- Providing high quality forage to suckling calves will increase weaning weight. Creep graze or advance graze calves, providing them with the best forages available.
- Fescue pastures are not likely to produce much this month. *Pasture, other than fescue, can be beneficial.* If it looks like pastures will run out, provide emergency feed such as a neighbor’s idle pasture, summer annuals or hay.
- Bulls should have been removed from the cow herd by now! They should be penned away from the cow herd with a good fence and allowed to regain lost weight and condition. It is a good time to evaluate physical condition, especially feet and legs. Bulls can be given medical attention and still have plenty of time to recover, e.g., corns, abscesses, split hooves, etc.
- Repair and improve corrals for fall working and weaning. Consider having an area to wean calves and retain ownership for postweaning feeding rather than selling “green” calves. Plan to participate in CPH-45 feeder calf sales in your area.

Fall-Calving Cow Herd

- It will soon be time for fall calves. Get ready, be sure you have the following:
 - record book
 - eartags for identification
 - iodine solution for newborn calf’s navel
 - calf puller
 - castration equipment
- Dry cows should be moved to better pastures as calving time approaches. Cows should start calving next month. Yearling heifers may begin “headstart” calving later this month. Plan to move cows to stockpiled fescue for the breeding season, so it will soon be time to apply nitrogen fertilizer.

UKAg

General

- Select pastures for stockpiling. Remove cattle and apply nitrogen when moisture conditions are favorable. Stockpiled fescues can be especially beneficial for fall-calving cows after calving.
- Take soil samples to determine pasture fertility needs. Fertilize as needed, this fall.
- Cattle may also be more prone to eat poisonous plants during periods of extreme temperature stress. They will stay in “wooded” areas and browse on plants that they would not normally consume. Consider putting a roll of hay in these areas and/or spraying plants like purple (perilla) mint which can be toxic.
- Keep a good mineral mix available at all times. The UK Beef IRM Basic Cow-Calf mineral is a good choice.
- Provide shade and water! Cattle will need shade during the hot part of the day. Check water supply frequently – as much as 20 gallons may be required by high producing cows in very hot weather.
- Avoid working cattle when temperatures are extremely high – especially those grazing high-endophyte fescue. If cattle must be handled, do so in the early morning.
- Do not give up on fly control in late summer, especially if fly numbers are greater than about 50 flies per animal. You can use a different “type” of spray or pour-on to kill any resistant flies at the end of fly season.



Cattlemen members break ground for the construction of a 12,000 square foot marketing pavilion to be constructed Fall of 2008.



Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

Matching Pasture Quality to Animal Needs

Now more than ever, it is important to make the most efficient use of our forage resources. Supplemental feed is very costly and must be used judiciously. We need to keep grazing cattle on pasture for as long a period as possible and feed only as necessary. As we do that, we must be sure that we are meeting the nutritional needs of the cows and calves. Most of our pasture systems are based fescue pastures. The typical production pattern for a cool season perennial like fescue is shown by figure 1. There is very little growth from February 15 to early April and fescue may almost go dormant from late July through August. Thus, these two periods are critical in the management of beef cattle. If adequate grass isn't available, stored or purchased feed must be utilized.

So, what is the most critical time in the production year for a beef cow? Nutritionally speaking, it is the time from calving to re-breeding. Usually a period of 70 to 90 days. Not only do we have to meet the nutritional needs of the cow at that time, but they should approach calving time in good body condition and stay in good condition until they are rebred.

That critical period of time is usually from late February until late May in spring calving cows. Which means that cows need to be fed extra feed from calving time until they are turned out onto good pasture (usually from late Feb. to April 10th). The challenge is by the time calves become less dependent on milk and can use more forage (about 3 months of age) fescue pastures diminish in quantity and quality – the summer slump. We need to consider a portion of pasture which grows during that period of time to keep spring-calves growing in July/August. Fall calving cows are “dry” during the summer forage slump and can be rebred during December and early January when accumulated fescue pasture is available. However, calves will need extra feed (creep feed or grazing) after the accumulated fescue is used up.

We have completed a three-year study of 5 different forage systems using fescue-based pastures at Princeton. Table 1 shows 3 of those systems for us to consider here – 2 of which are spring-calving systems and 1 is fall-calving. Each system consisted of 15 cow-calf pairs on 24 acres of pasture for 3 years. The goal was to graze about 10 months – feeding from about February 15 to April 15.

In each group, cows were in a body condition score of 5+ at the start of the breeding season – when cows were AI'ed using timed insemination. Pregnancy rates were similar for both spring calving groups – 89% for high endophyte and 91% for low endophyte. The fall group had a pregnancy rate of 96% with 71% pregnancy rate for the one round of a timed AI.

Calves that were born in the spring tended to be about 10 pounds heavier at birth (90 and 87 lb for HE and LE, respectively) than those born in the fall (79.6 lb). The same bulls were used AI throughout the trial and clean-up bulls were rotated across treatments. Spring calves were weaned on an average of October 17 when pasture became limiting and fall calves were weaned on June 1. The actual weaning weights were 581, 587 and 652 lb for spring/low, spring/high and fall/high, respectively. It is important to note that fall calves were older and received soyhulls as creep feed.

The most important thing to glean from this trial is that we can have forage management systems which are built around high-endophyte fescue that will perform similarly to low-endophyte systems if we meet the animals' nutritional needs at critical times. Spring calving cows must come out of the winter-feeding period in good body condition (a BCS of 5 means that there is enough flesh to cover all of the ribs and spinous processes) and re-breed early for acceptable pregnancy rates.

Calf gains were also similar for both spring groups. Remember that pastures were rotationally grazed (6-4 acre blocks) and bermudagrass (1/3 acreage) was available to graze during the summer slump period. Very little was gained by overseeding bermudagrass with cereal rye for winter grazing.

There are many forages and combinations of forages that will work for cow-calf production in Kentucky, but most will (1) be based on fescue, (2) insure that cows stay in good body condition especially at breeding, (3) meet the nutritional needs of cows and calves at critical times, and (4) rotational grazing is a vital method of stretching (or allotting) the forage supply. Using these management systems with a stocking rate of 1.6 acres per cow gave us enough grazing for about 10 months but did not allow for hay production – although it certainly minimized the need for stored feed.

Calving season:	Spring	Spring	Fall
Endophyte:	High	Low	High
Forage (acres):	Fescue-clover (8)	Fescue clover (8)	Fescue-clover (12)
	Fescue-N (12)	Fescue-N (12)	Fescue-N (12)
Item	Bermuda/Rye (4)	Bermuda/Rye (4)	w/creep feed
Cow-calf pairs/yr	15	15	15
Cow data			
Wt. @ breeding, lb	1288	1265	1290
BCS @ Breeding (1-9)	5.4	5.5	5.3
Pregnancy rate, no (%)	40/45 (89)	41/45 (91)	43/45 (96)
Timed AI rate, no (%)	27/45 (60)	22/45 (49)	32/45 (71)
Calf data (Avg. of 45/trtmt)			
Birthdate	Mar. 6	Mar. 11	Sept. 24
Birthweight, lb	90.2	87.2	79.6
Wean date	Oct. 17	Oct. 17	June 1
Actual wean wt, lb	581	587	652