

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



**GREEN COUNTY
AGRICULTURE NEWS**

August 2009

**Cooperative
Extension Service**
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**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.

**Plugging in to Kentucky's
Local Food Economy**

We get a lot of press about our local food culture here in Kentucky. The local food economy has indeed grown quite a bit as our agriculture has adapted to changing consumer needs. Recent research with households in the Kentucky Food Consumer Survey suggests local foods are some of the hottest consumer tickets out there, especially for fresh produce, dairy products, meat and eggs.

We've seen growth in farm markets, wineries, Community Supported Agriculture groups, local produce and foods in our restaurants and grocery stores. Recent legislation has made it easier for on-farm processing, opening the floodgates for locally processed products. The "local" aspect is carrying a lot of currency with Kentucky consumers right now, especially for fresh products, but also for processed products. Agritourism, county fairs and festivals and on-farm markets fan the flame of interest in local products.

Diversity in a local food system economy is a good thing in that it promotes innovation and consumer choice. Many farmers are giving serious thought as to how they might or if they should jump into the mix.

The direct marketing culture has been dynamic in Kentucky, and it has received substantial support from Cooperative Extension, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and other agencies. There are numerous training and certification programs for micro and home processors, certified kitchens, as well as promotional programs through Kentucky Proud targeting restaurants, grocers and consumers.

With new marketing opportunities for farmers, come new challenges. Direct marketing involves new business models, new production systems, new requirements for addressing quality assurance and distribution. Marketing these products requires a new kind of attention to promotion and marketing. Legal and insurance considerations typically take on new dimensions in the direct-marketing world as well.

Many producers are smaller and can only seasonally market their products. Total production and marketing costs tend to be higher and subsequently are reflected in the prices.

So for consumers, as you're out at the farm markets and county fairs, and visiting your local restaurants and groceries, compare the local products to the alternatives. For many fresh products, there are obvious quality advantages for the local goods, and consumers are more directly contributing back to their local economy and supporting local farmers.

Fall Harvest Safety Tips

Fall harvest season is a busy, often stressful, time for Kentucky farmers and their families. It also is a peak season for agricultural injuries and an especially important time for farm families to remember safety.

Be sure all workers are trained and physically capable of operating equipment and understand the safety procedures for it. Take time to talk to workers about safety.

Long working hours can lead to fatigue and stress, making you less alert to potential safety hazards. Take some breaks when operating equipment for an extended period of time. If possible, trade off with other workers for a change of pace.

Dress appropriately for the job. Avoid loose clothing, jackets with dangling strings, and sweatshirts that could become entangled in moving equipment.

Entanglement in moving parts, especially power take-offs or other chain and belt drivers, is a major fall harvest hazard. Inspect machinery and equipment to be sure shields and guards on moving parts are in place and in good repair. Replace ineffective or missing safety equipment.

Before getting off equipment, disengage the power and wait for moving parts to completely stop. When possible, shut off the engine.

It is always a good idea to take the ignition key with you so another person does not unexpectedly start equipment while you are performing maintenance or repair. If you are working under any piece of equipment, such as a header unit, always use the jack stand or hydraulic cylinder locks to prevent it from suddenly falling and pinning you under. Be sure all safety locks are operational.

A pinhole-size hydraulic leak can cause severe tissue damage. If you are injected with oil from a hydraulic leak, immediately seek medical assistance. The oil must be surgically removed, and delays can result in serious infections and possible amputations.

Always use paper or cardboard to check for hydraulic leaks.

Tractor overturns are the leading cause of farm deaths. To prevent these tragedies, equip older model tractors with a roll-over protective structure. Most tractors manufactured after the late 1960s or early 1970s can be equipped with a ROPS for \$800 to \$1,200, a small price to pay for basic safety.

Make it a habit to use the seat belt to ensure you remain inside the zone of protection provided by the ROPS or safety cab. The seat belt also will keep you from being thrown off the tractor if you hit an obstacle. Being thrown off the tractor and run over is the second leading cause of tractor deaths in Kentucky.

Although not as common, run-over injuries to extra riders, especially those involving children, who fall off are very tragic. To prevent these tragedies, never allow any extra riders on tractors or equipment.

Keep bystanders away from operating equipment. Also, be aware of people who may have come into the area. Always check around equipment before starting or moving it.

Carry a fire extinguisher on all tractors and self-propelled equipment, especially combines. Periodically check extinguishers to be sure they are pressurized and in good condition.

To prevent fires on combines, be sure equipment is clean and hoses and fuel systems are in good shape and not leaking. Remove trash and debris around engine components.

Check for clearances with overhead power lines when operating or moving tall machines, because contact may result in electrocution. Moving portable augers around overhead power lines is especially hazardous so always lower them first.

When filling silos, watch for the bleach-like odor that indicates silo gas. This yellowish brown gas is heavier than air and will settle on the silage surface and may flow down the chute into adjacent livestock areas. Close any doors leading to livestock areas, keep the base of the silo chute well ventilated and do not enter a silo during the first two weeks.

Farm vehicles on public roads are involved in injury accidents from 6,000 to 7,000 times annually in the United States and typically more than 200 collisions involving farm machinery on public roads occur in Kentucky every year. Thus, people driving farm machinery and those driving vehicles should be especially careful and watchful.

Keep slow-moving-vehicle emblems and extremity markings clean and bright to help motorists notice equipment. Replace faded SMV emblems and check headlights, taillights and flashing lights for satisfactory operation.

To alert on-coming drivers, use reflectors or reflective tape when the edges of towed equipment extend beyond the left side of a tractor. If a tractor has mirrors, keep them clean and adjusted for the driver to watch for approaching motorists. When possible, pull completely off the road to let a line of traffic behind pass.

Since it may be difficult to anticipate the operational intentions of farm machinery on the roadway, other drivers need to watch for unmarked field entrances or other places the driver might be planning to enter. A tractor may need to move to the right to complete a left turn so do not assume the driver wants you to pass when moving to the right side. Pass only in a designated passing zone or when the other driver signals and completely pulls off the road.

Dairy Heifer Replacements

To keep a dairy farm's milk flow coming, cows need to calve every 13 to 14 months to initiate a new lactation. The female, or heifer, calves born usually are raised to become potential replacements of cows in the dairy herd.

In a business sense, the heifers in the herd are your assets. Unlike all other aspects of your dairy business, such as machinery, equipment and facilities, the only assets that can replace themselves are the cows. In fact, the value of the cow as an asset is enhanced because she can replace herself. The traditional way to produce heifer replacements for the dairy herd was to get the adult females pregnant and hope for a female calf. The sex of the calf was largely unpredictable, and usually the ratio of female to male calves was about 52 to 48 percent.

Since the early 1900s, scientists have been trying to develop a way to separate sperm into male and female producers. In the past few years, scientists have developed methods that can accurately sort a semen sample so that 90 percent of that sample carries the X, or female producing, chromosome. This means that from matings with artificially inseminated (AI) sires using such semen, 90 percent of the calves born should be female. This semen is referred to as gender-selected semen.

Obviously, using gender-selected semen can alter the ratio of female to male calves born in the dairy herd. Instead of expecting about half of the calves born to be female, that proportion is now about 90 percent. This could mean producing more heifer replacements for the herd, which you could then sell as heifers or use them to quickly expand your dairy herd or to replace unproductive cows.

There is a downside, however, because research has shown that the conception rate using gender-selected sperm is reduced to 10 to 20 percent and is most generally recommended to be used only on heifers that have a naturally higher conception rate. Further, the cost of the semen is higher, partly due to the cost of the process of sorting the semen samples. Of course, the genetic quality of the sire that produced the semen and whose genetic characteristics will be transferred to his offspring is also an issue. Thus new technology presents multiple factors you need to consider before using.

Tax Law Changes for 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 passed by congress and signed by President Obama contains a few tax changes that may benefit farms.

The new law extends the \$250,000 Section 179 expenses that we had during the 2008 tax year through 2009. Taxpayers should be aware that the \$250,000 amount is reduced when the total cost of qualified property placed in service for 2009 exceeds \$800,000. The Kentucky Section 179 limit remains at \$25,000.

The 50% first year bonus depreciation deduction for qualified new property placed in service has also been extended through 2009. This combined with the increased Section 179 expense provides a significant amount of depreciation expense available during 2009.

This new law also reduces the waiting period to 7 years from 10 years for S-Corporations wanting to sell property before the 10 year waiting period for built in gains. This is for any sale that takes place in 2009 or 2010.

First time home buyers may qualify for up to an \$8,000 credit under this new law. The credit will expire on November 29, 2009. A taxpayer can take a 10% tax credit on the purchase of a first home up to \$8,000. The credit does not have to be paid back unless you sell the house within 36 months of purchasing, or if the taxpayer stops using the home as his or her principal residence.

These are only a few selected highlights from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Always consult with your tax preparer before making any tax decisions.

*If you have any questions regarding this newsletter,
please contact me.*

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