

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



**GREEN COUNTY
AGRICULTURE NEWS**

November 2009

**Cooperative
Extension Service**
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Know Hay Quality to Ensure Proper Nutrition

With the cool days of November comes the need to prepare for feeding livestock through the winter. This year was a bad one for producing hay so evaluating hay to determine its quality will enable you to ensure your cattle receive the proper nutrition.

Supplement as needed to keep cows in good body condition for strong, healthy calves. Have your hay analyzed for nutritive quality and formulate a feeding program that provides adequate nutrition using hay and supplements.

On an energy basis, corn and by-products such as soyhulls may be a better buy than hay. You might be better off basing your feeding program on the amount of hay you have available and purchasing extra nutrition in the form of concentrates.

It also is important to inventory your hay supply. You need to know how many cattle you plan to feed and for how many days. It is also important to know the quality feed needed for different animal groups such as dry cows versus lactating cows and formulate feeding plans for each group.

Testing to determine the quality of dry hay as well as haylage can be done by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's forage testing program. For a \$10 fee, the KDA will send someone to your farm to sample your hay. Producers who have their hay tested will be able to obtain a complete balanced ration for their particular needs and won't be guessing whether they are meeting their livestock's needs. For more information on the forage testing program call 1-800-248-4628 or visit the forage testing Web site at <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/forage/index.htm>.

It is also important to get as much use from your hay as possible so be sure to reduce hay losses. Hay losses can be the result of trampling, leaf shatter, chemical and physical deterioration, fecal contamination and refusal.

**A New Technology for Determining
Pregnancy in Your Cows**

Researchers have developed a method to determine pregnancy in cattle via blood sampling. The blood test is called BioPRYN and is marked by a company called Bio Tracking LLC.

The blood test method to determine pregnancy is simple and accurate. First, a blood sampling kit needs to be ordered from the company. The easiest method is to go to biotracking.com and look for their products. Usually, the cost is about \$1.55 per cow for the kit. All the tubes should be labeled according to the instructions in the kit. The most difficult part of this process for most producers will be obtaining the blood sample. Cows must be at least 30 days pregnant and 90 days from calving for the test to work. Also, producer's who have no experience taking a blood sample will need to schedule this test with their local veterinarian. Once the sample is obtained, the samples are packaged and sent to one of Bio Tracking's 25 laboratories located across the US. The cost for the test is \$2.40 per cow. So the total cost per cow will be the cost of the kit (\$1.55), plus the test cost (\$2.40), plus the cost of mailing and any costs associated with obtaining the sample if you cannot do it yourself. Likely the cost per cow will be less than \$5 for most producers.

The results are normally obtained with 2-3 weeks and the accuracy of the test is very high. If the test calls the cow open, then the producer is 99+% sure the cow is open. When the test determines a cow pregnant, you can be 93-95% sure they are pregnant. This test will not determine stage of pregnancy (i.e. 90 days versus 120 days).

Many beef producers in Kentucky have limited access to large animal veterinarians. Using this blood sampling technique for pregnancy determination may be a solution to these producers who have been unable to obtain a pregnancy diagnosis in their cows.

Take Soil Samples This Fall

Time and money are two benefits of taking soil core samples during the fall.

Fall soil sampling allows you ample time to implement research-based fertility recommendations before spring planting. When you receive the soil test results, read the pH and lime recommendations. You may need to apply lime to neutralize soil acidity. To be fully effective, agricultural lime should be applied in the fall because it takes about six months to break down and react with the soil. So, the earlier you spread lime, the better.

The turn-around time for samples is much faster in the fall, usually within a week, because fewer people are submitting samples this time of year.

All recommended fertilizers, except nitrogen, can be applied this fall. Buying fertilizer in the fall usually will save you money because prices are cheaper due to lower demand. Also, we usually have drier soil in the fall making it easier to get the spreader truck into the field.

Farmers who don't test fields and pastures can only guess at fertility needs. Estimating how much fertilizer is needed often results in applying more than necessary. And this is an unnecessary expense, not to mention the negative environmental effect.

The (County Name) Cooperative Extension Service has soil sample bags or boxes, details on taking accurate samples and other pertinent information. There is a nominal fee to cover soil analysis costs.

Your soil analysis report is based on that little pint of soil you submitted. For the most accurate report, take the best soil samples possible. These tips will help.

You'll need to take different samples for various land uses such as agricultural fields, lawn, garden, fruit trees, ornamental shrubs and azaleas because these may have distinct fertility and acidity or alkalinity requirements.

Take a sample from poor growing area and from adjacent areas of good growth. Mark each sample with a letter, or numbers on a field map. Collect at least 10 soil cores for small areas and up to 20 cores for larger fields.

How deeply you take cores for farm use depends on the tillage system used. For tilled areas, take cores from the surface to plow depth, usually six to eight inches. Take cores down to a four-inch depth in no-till fields and pastures.

For home lawns, take cores from the surface down to four inches. For gardens, ornamentals and fruit trees, take cores down to six to eight inches.

Be sure to take all cores from an area at the same depth.

After you've collected soil cores, put them in a clean, dry plastic bucket, crush the soil and thoroughly mix it. Allow this to air dry in an open, contamination-free space.

When it dries, fill the sample bag and completely fill out the information sheet. A separate sheet is needed for agricultural soil, home gardens, lawns and turf grasses and commercial horticultural crops.

It's a good idea to take core samples around the same time each year to compare results from year to year.

Center of Kentucky Dairy Futures & Contracting Short Course

Depressed milk prices threaten Kentucky's Dairy Industry. Volatile markets make it challenging for producers to remain profitable from one year to another. One method that would help producers gain control in the price received for their milk would be the adoption of using milk futures to contract milk prices. By using milk futures, producers could protect themselves from the volatility of the milk market and over the long run be more profitable.

The agents and a group of dairy farmers of Adair, Taylor, and Green have designed a program to provide producers with the necessary education needed to contract milk using futures. The program will consist of 3 meetings lead by agents, specialist, and industry persons.

Session 1-October 30- Intro to Futures- Kenny Burdine

Session 2- November 10-Milk futures trends, basis, and price insurance- Kenny Burdine and Sam Finney (KDDC)

Session 3- November 18 -How to open trading accounts and working with a broker- Mark Potter- KDM Trading

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

Brian S. Newman

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

Tips on Home Landscape Fertilization

Late fall and early winter are the best times to fertilize landscapes with mixed plantings of grass and woody plants.

But how much fertilizer should you apply?

First, take eight to 10 soil samples from several areas of the yard. Mix the samples together and take them to the (County Name) Cooperative Extension Service office to be submitted for analyses to determine soil pH (soil acidity or alkalinity) and whether you need to apply other necessary nutrients including phosphorus and potassium. You will receive research-based recommendations on the fertility needs of your landscape. There is a nominal fee for a soil test.

It's especially important to have a soil test done before you set out trees and establish lawns so you can add needed amendments prior to planting. For an existing landscape, take samples from only the upper three to four inches of soil. Remove any thatch or plant debris from the mixed sample before submitting it.

Nitrogen is the most common element applied with landscape fertilization. However, soil tests don't give recommendations for nitrogen because it is rapidly lost through leaching or is removed during plant growth.

Deciding how much nitrogen to apply depends on the level of growth and maintenance you want. For average, healthy growth, apply two pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Apply four pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet for more lush growth, which also will require a higher level of maintenance.

It's important to note that application recommendations are pounds of actual nitrogen, while a fertilizer bag lists the amount of nitrogen (first of the three-number analysis) as a percentage. A common lawn and garden fertilizer (10-10-10) contains 10 percent nitrogen so you would need to apply 10 pounds of fertilizer to get one pound of actual nitrogen. You would need to apply three and one-third pounds of ammonium nitrate, which is 33 percent nitrogen, to get one pound of nitrogen. Urea contains more nitrogen, 46 percent, so you would get roughly one-half pound of nitrogen for every pound of urea applied.

There are several reasons late fall through early winter is the optimum time to apply nitrogen to yards with a mixture of grass and woody plants.

Applying nitrogen to grass in the spring and summer usually promotes excessive growth that's more susceptible to drought, disease and heat. Fertilizer applications to woody plants before they go dormant might interfere with their ability to become cold hardy. Most woody ornamentals lose leaves, indicating dormancy, by November 1. This is why November and December applications usually are best.

You can split fertilizer applications into two or three parts applied four to six weeks apart. For example, if you want to apply four pounds of actual nitrogen, make two applications each of two pounds of nitrogen, say in early November and again in early December. You also could make three one-pound nitrogen applications in early November, late November and finally in mid- to late-December.

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

Farm Structure and Commodity Handling- November 3, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office

Beef Quality Assurance Training- November 5, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office

Fencing Improvement Class- November 9, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office

Center of Kentucky Dairy Futures and Contracting Short Course- October 30, November 10, and November 18 at 10:00 a.m.

Tri-County Winter Grain Meeting- 6:00 p.m. Campbellsville. Taylor County Extension Office.

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Cooperative Extension Service

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