Volume 1, Issue 3

July 15, 2006

UF IFAS

Northeast Florida Beef and Forage Group

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Dear Producers,

As you know, we have been very dry this year, most of Northeast Florida's pastures and forages have yet to produce significantly. Many of you have had to alter various pasture and forage production practices due to these droughty conditions. Eventually, we will get some rain and the forages will rebound. Feel free to contact your local extension agent for assistance in your forage management decisions this summer.

Be sure to mark your calendars for our 9th Annual Regional Hay Field Day. This year it will be held at the University of Florida's Suwannee Valley Research and Education Center in Live Oak on July 19th. Look for more information about the hay field day in this newsletter.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

David B. Nistler
Chairman, North Florida Beef & Forage Group

Should We Fertilize Bermudagrass Hay Fields Again That Were Not Cut in May Because of Dry Weather?

Jacque Breman, Union County Extension

If you were like most hay producers, you followed the UF – IFAS Extension Soil Test Lab recommendation and applied 80 pounds actual nitrogen/acre plus the phosphorous and potash (if your soil test showed a need for these plant nutrients). Like most hay producers in northeast Florida, you probably had so much dry weather that you were not able to cut in May.

When the rains start, one of the questions might be whether the nitrogen you put out in mid-March or April might still be in the soil to stimulate the Bermudagrass growth for the first cutting. How much nitrogen has volatized from soil urease enzyme activity depends on the form of nitrogen you ap-

Spring Weed Management (Cont)

plied (anhydrous ammonia - N, urea – N, or nitrate – N). Anhydrous ammonia – N tends to remain in the soil longer than the other forms. The phosphorous and potash fertilizer should still be in the top zone of the soil, and available for plant uptake and growth for the first cutting of hay. If it has been longer than two months since you applied nitrogen, you may have to apply an additional 80 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer per acre (1), to stimulate Bermudagrass growth for your first hay cutting.

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According to research done by the Phosphate and Potash Institute, each ton of Bermudagrass dry matter contained about 50 pounds of N, 12 pounds of P_2O_5 and 47 pounds of K_2O. If you harvest seven tons of hay dry matter/ acre, you are removing about 350 pounds of N, 85 pounds of P_2O_5, 330 pounds of K_2O, 25 pounds of Mg and 30 pounds of S from each acre (3). These removed plant nutrients have to be provided by the soil and applied fertilizer. That is why soil tests are such an important part of your hay production plan.

Without soil test results to guide your summer fertilizer plan, you might want to apply 80 pounds actual nitrogen and 40 pounds potash per acre, after each hay cutting (1). UF-IFAS researchers, Mackowiak and Blount, found applying just nitrogen plus potassium-magnesium sulphate (0-22-22) could prevent 62 to 90% Bermudagrass yield loss compared to straight nitrogen fertilization, by the second year of that kind of fertilization program (2).

References:

1. Kidder, G., C.G. Chambliss, and R. Mylavarap. 2002. UF/IFAS Standardized Fertilization Recommendations for Agronomic Crops. [Online]. Available at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/SS163 (Verified 26 May 2006).

2. Macowiak, C.L., and A.R. Blount. 2006. Summer forage hay nutrient demands. NRFEC News 8:2-3.

3. Segars, W.I., and N.R. Usherwood. 1997. Timing and rates of nitrogen, phosporus and potassiuim for top yields of quality Bermudagrass. Better Crops 81: 21-23.

Horse Grazing Management

David Nistler, Clay County Extension

Sound grazing management can decrease feeding expenses and stable cleaning and other chores, leaving more time for the recreational enjoyment of horses. In addition, pastures also help to maintain healthy horses by providing exercise and fresh air. Although properly managed pastures can be beneficial to both the horse and owner; poor grazing management results in the loss of groundcover that can lead to soil erosion, the degradation of water quality in neighboring streams and ponds, and increased weed pressure in pastures.

Proper grazing management includes allowing adequate time for the plants to establish themselves, providing adequate land area per horse, utilizing rotation and rest periods, confining horses to a "sacrifice area" or exercise lot during periods of drought or wet soil conditions, managing manure, maintaining soil fertility, and clipping the pasture to even out under-grazed areas and control weed populations.

Animal performance improves when pastures are closely and uniformly grazed. The forage in these pastures is younger and has a higher leaf content and protein level. It is also more digestible than forage in under-grazed pastures where excess forage accumulates and matures.

There is a major difference between close grazing and overgrazing. When pastures are overgrazed and forage availability is limited (not enough feed available), animal performance declines due to reduced intake. A closely grazed pasture can become over-grazed very quickly if forage growth slows and the stocking rate is not reduced. Overgrazing can weaken pasture plants, causing stands to thin and allowing weeds to take hold.

The phrase **"Grazing Management"** is very important. A horse that is grazing should not remove more than 50 percent of the available forage. Simply put, if your horse eats 50 percent of the grass that was there prior to grazing, remove him and allow the pasture to rest 3 - 4 weeks or until the grass regrows to the original height. This approach is called "take-half-and-leave-half."

Horses seldom graze pastures to a uniform height unless the stocking rate is very high. After rotating the horses out of a pasture, it may be useful to mow the pasture to a uniform height. Mowing helps control weeds and other undesirable plants, promotes uniform regrowth of forage for the next grazing cycle, and helps break up dung piles. Rotational grazing helps maintain quality pastures and is important for the health of the horse. Internal parasite infective larvae and/or eggs are not as likely to survive when horses are periodically removed from the pasture. The deworming schedule can also be planned so a horse is passing very few parasite eggs when it goes into a new pasture.

For additional information on horse pasture/forage management, read the University of Florida's IFAS Extension publication "Pastures and Forage Crops for Horses". Producers can locate this publication either at their local extension office or online at: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AA216.

"Although properly managed pastures can be beneficial to both the horse and owner; poor grazing management results in the loss of groundcover that can lead to soil erosion, the degradation of water quality in neighboring streams and ponds, and increased weed pressure in pastures."

Minimizing Loss in Storing Hay

Cindy Sanders,
Alachua County Extension

Many livestock producers store hay in long rows along the side of the hay field, for month's even years before feeding. Studies show that there is significant loss of quantity and nutritive value of that hay. Weathering of hay is favored by rainfall, humidity, and high temperatures. This weathering affects the dry matter content in the hay. The range of Dry Matter loss can range from 5 – 50%. This loss depends on how the bale was put up, and weather conditions while being stored, and if the hay was stored up off the ground. Typically more than half of the weathering loss occurs on the bottom of the bale. This loss can be protected by placing the rolls on railroad ties, wooden pallets, old tires, or a rock pad.

Some ways to protect hay loss in during storage is to use a bale wrapper, do not store hay under trees or low areas, or build a barn for storage. When stacking hay, place the flat ends together, and place rows 3 feet apart, preferable on a down slope for drainage.

Another loss of hay is the actual feeding loss. This loss can be reduced by using hay ring feeders instead of feeding hay directly on the ground, and also by limiting the amount of hay to be fed so that hay is not walked on and stomped. Prioritize hay feeding, feeding loosely baled hay first or older hay first.

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9th Regional Hay Field Day
June 19, 2006

Will be held at the North Florida Research and Education Center in Live Oak.

Registration $5
Includes booklet, meal and program.

Topics: Freeze tolerance of Bahiagrass, stacking and storing hay, summer annual legumes, mole cricket control, spraying considerations, herbicide and weed control update

See attached brochure for more Information and Directions!

The Northeast Florida Beef and Forage Group is made up of UF/IFAS Extension Agents from 9 counties in Northeast Florida. The purpose of the NFBFG is to provide educational programming to North Florida livestock producers dealing with nutrition, health, reproduction, management, and marketing of their livestock and forage commodities.

For more information and program dates and publications you may visit our website at

http://nfbfg.ifas.ufl.edu

- Program Information
- Program Handouts and Pictures
- Current Beef Forage Issues
- County Newsletters

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