

BEEF FORAGE NEWSLETTER

July - September 2008

Clark County Extension Service

640 S. 6th, Suite B

Arkadelphia, AR 71923



Pasture Calendar

JULY

- Fertilize warm-season grasses every 4 – 6 weeks.
- Harvest for quality hay every 4 – 6 weeks.
- Plan for fall seeding.
- Apply lime for fall planting.
- Plan for fall fertilization for stockpiling grasses.

AUGUST

- Harvest on schedule for quality hay.
- Fertilize grasses for a stockpiled fall grazing.
- Prepare seed-bed for planting.
- Test soil and lime.
- Fertilize cool season grasses (N,P,K)

SEPTEMBER (This is pasture improvement month)

- Fertilize cool-season grasses for fall and winter grazing.
- Plant cool-season grasses, winter annuals and legumes.
- Apply lime, especially for renovating.
- Completely use Bermuda before grazing fescue, for Grazing Management.

By-Product Utilization for Beef Production Meeting

The Cooperative Extension Service will be conducting a Byproduct Utilization meeting in Hope on Tuesday, August 12. The meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. with supper and is sponsored by Livestock Nutrition Center. The meeting should be over by 7:45 p.m.

The topics that will be covered are:

- How to approach Commodity Purchasing
- When Forage Quality Matters
- Computer-Assisted Diet Formulation

There is NO cost for the program but you must register by August 5th.

Contact Dr. Paul Beck at the SWREC in Hope. The number is 870-777-9702.

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating.

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Fall armyworm management poster

Forestry and Wildlife Field Day

The Southwest Research and Extension will be conducting a Forestry and Wildlife Field Day on September 18th, beginning at 7:30 am and ending at 2:00 pm. The topics will include Silvo-Pasture, Quail Management, Poultry Litter Applications, Basic Pine thinning, Herbicides in Hardwood, Best Management Practices, Tree Shelters and Hardwood Planting for Cost Share Programs.

The cost will be \$5.00 per person, if you register by September 15th. After September 15th, the cost will be \$10 per person. Registration will be limited to the first 120 people. Lunch will also be provided.

For more information, you may contact Dr. Jon Barry at 870-777-9702 or email him at jbarry@uaex.edu You can also register online at jbarry@uaex.edu

Time to Tighten the Belt

Brett Barham, Ph.D., Assistant Professor – Breeding and Genetics, Cooperative Extension Service

Every producer needs to look at his or her operation under a microscope to determine areas of inefficiencies and to work on addressing those problems.

Every day, the news seems to be dominated by the rising costs of fuel and food. I doubt this is anything new for cattle producers, with the increasing costs of inputs on the farm. If you have not started to think about how this is going to affect your management, you'd better. Producers who adjust their management to meet the current conditions are much more likely to remain in business. Every producer needs to look at his or her operation under a microscope to determine areas of inefficiencies and to work on addressing those problems. Most producers will come to one of two solutions: 1) Keep outputs the same and reduce input costs, or 2) Keep input costs the same and increase outputs. Either of those options represents ways of increasing production efficiency. One thing is certain, detailed records to track expenses and income are important in either of those scenarios. Each producer can take those records and determine fairly quickly if there are expenses that seem out of line. This is where your local county agents can be of assistance. They can compare your budgets and production levels to records that have been collected on different projects across the state.

Once you have done all you can to control costs, the only thing left to work on is the income side. To increase income, you must increase the pounds of calves sold and/or the value of the calves sold. In a Cattlemen's College presentation at the Beef Industry Annual Convention, Cattle-Fax analysts listed key value-added attributes, which they called the "stair steps to profitability."

Performance history from the feedlot and packer adds \$2 to \$5 per hundredweight.

Certification of preconditioning and weaning programs adds \$4 to \$8 per hundredweight.

Source and age verification adds \$10 to \$25 per hundredweight.

Verification of production practices that qualify for natural or premium programs adds \$3 to \$7 per hundredweight.

Cattle-Fax analysts also listed the "11 habits of high-return producers" in their Cattlemen's College presentation.

These are:

1. Below-average annual cow costs.
2. Lower-than-average calf breakeven levels.
3. Lower feed costs.
4. Lower interest expense, less debt.
5. Lower general operating expenses.
6. Higher average weaning weights.
7. Higher conception rates.
8. More pounds weaned per cow exposed.
9. More high-quality bulls with good genetics.
10. Preventative herd-health programs.
11. High-quality pastures to maintain nutritional requirements of the cow.

How many of these “good habits” do you have? As you can see, the first five items in this list deal with controlling costs. In most cases, controlling costs may be easier to accomplish than increasing income. Sometimes increasing revenue requires spending money in some areas. Increasing expenditures can actually lower costs if you look at it in terms of cost per unit of production, such as per pound of weaned calf. If a \$20 expense results in 40 additional pounds of weaned calf, you come out ahead. Examples that would fall in this category include expenses for implants, preconditioning or better genetics.

The management changes needed to be successful in the current market and economy will be different for each individual producer. The one certainty will be that those who fail to change and optimize production will continue to face financial difficulties. This would be a great time to gather some records and spend some time with your local county agent and develop a plan that will help you to become more efficient.

Forage Testing up 51% in Arkansas

Dr. Shane Gadberry, Assistant Professor

A survey at two Arkansas Beef Improvement Program workshops this past winter revealed 92 percent of the participants fed hay at least one-third of the year. The survey also revealed that two-thirds of the participants in the two workshops never had their hay lots analyzed for nutrient content. Although having forages analyzed for nutrient composition isn't a common practice for livestock producers, the number of samples submitted to the University of Arkansas Diagnostics Laboratory was up during the 2007-08 hay production and feeding seasons.

Higher feed prices may be the driving force behind the 51 percent growth, compared to 2006-07, in the number of hay samples submitted to the Diagnostics Laboratory between May 2007 and April 2008. Hay analyses reached almost 1,000 samples, up from the previous nine-year average of 554 samples. Bermudagrass and mixed grass accounted for 37 percent and 35 percent of the samples, with the remaining representing fescue, johnsongrass, forage sorghums and alfalfa.

Twenty-four percent of the samples submitted requested nitrate analysis. Within this group, 34 percent contained 700 ppm (beginning level for cautionary measures) or greater nitrate-nitrogen. While higher nitrogen costs have producers talking about reducing fertilization, concerns over nitrate accumulation do not diminish, especially with certain forages (johnsongrass, sudangrass and sorghum-sudan hybrids). Fortunately, many of the county Extension offices are now equipped with qualitative nitrate test kits that can be used to screen hay samples or standing crops prior to harvest.

The protein and energy content of the hays tested in 2007-08 remained the same compared to past years. Crude protein averaged 12 percent, with 68 percent of the samples within the range of 8.2 to 15.8 percent CP. Energy content, expressed as TDN (total digestible nutrients), averaged 56.5 percent with 68 percent of the samples within the range of 51.2 to 61.8 percent TDN.

Very few of the hay samples analyzed did not have enough combined protein and energy to meet gestating cow requirements. Overall, 95 percent contained a sufficient amount of protein for late-gestation and 84 percent contained an adequate amount of TDN.

Due to the additional protein requirement associated with milk production, there were fewer samples that met the protein requirement for lactation; however, 79 percent still contained enough protein for cows with moderate milking ability. Total digestible nutrients, unfortunately, were almost opposite of what was observed with protein. Sixty-two percent of the hays WERE NOT adequate in TDN for lactation.

High feed prices and other input costs are causing livestock producers to re-think forage production and supplemental feed practices. Hopefully, the value of forage testing is being realized. At the writing of this article, winter corn futures were trading for \$6/bu. This could keep the byproduct feed energy market in the \$150 to \$170/ton range or greater and supplemental energy feed costs during lactation over \$0.15 per head daily, not including hauling or local feed mill markups.

Not only does forage testing help identify where nutrient shortfalls occur and the type of supplemental feed needed to compensate for deficiencies, but forage testing is also a valuable tool to help determine if pre-harvest forage management practices need adjusting so the reliance on purchased concentrate feeds can be minimized. Grass hay

protein content can be correlated with the amount of nitrogen fertilization. Reducing or eliminating nitrogen fertilization rates will not only reduce hay yields but will also result in lower hay protein content, increasing the odds for needing protein supplementation. On the other hand, TDN is highly correlated with plant fiber content – the higher the fiber, the lower the digestible energy. Fiber increases as the plant matures over time. If a forage analysis returns with an undesirably low TDN content, it can be interpreted as harvest was delayed too long. To improve TDN, the forage will have to be harvested at an earlier stage of maturity.

Rainfall patterns kept many producers in Arkansas from getting in the hay fields soon enough this spring, and a lot of fescue and ryegrass were being harvested at a mature stage. Ideally, cool-season grasses are harvested at a late boot, early head stage, which means the seed heads are just beginning to emerge from the stem. Harvesting at this stage will generally result in a TDN content that is sufficient for a lactating beef cow. Because of the delayed harvest, many of the hays cut this spring will be inadequate in energy for lactation.

The additional fuel and fertilizer costs along with short hay supplies have kept hay markets 54 percent above the five-year average reported by USDA. High feed prices and the lack of storage and handling facilities will limit the adoption of replacing hay with alternative feedstuffs in a wintering diet. Until reliance on hay for wintering beef cattle is minimized by stockpiling forages in fall and establishing complimentary forage systems, forage testing will continue to be a valuable tool for making cost-effective winter feeding and harvested forage management decisions.

To the Table, *with Kris Elliott, Clark County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences*

Country Fried Steaks with Spicy Blue Cheese Sauce



Ingredients:

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| 4 beef round (sirloin) ¾ inch tip side steaks | 1/2 cup unseasoned dry bread crumbs |
| 1/2 cup all-purpose flour | 1/4 teaspoon salt |
| 1/2 teaspoon salt | 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder |
| 1/4 teaspoon pepper | 1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper |
| 1 egg, beaten | 2 tablespoons vegetable oil |
| 1 tablespoon water | |

Sauce:

- 1/2 cup refrigerated prepared blue cheese dressing
- 1/4 cup dairy sour cream
- 1 teaspoon green hot pepper sauce

Instructions:

1. Combine flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper in shallow dish. Whisk egg and water together in shallow bowl until blended. Combine bread crumbs, 1/4 teaspoon salt, garlic powder and red pepper in separate shallow dish.
2. Cut steaks into a total of 4 serving-size pieces. Place between sheets of waxed paper; pound to 1/4 inch thickness. Dip each steak in flour mixture to coat both sides lightly; shake off excess. Dip in egg mixture, then in bread crumb mixture to coat.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Place 2 steaks in skillet; cook 5 minutes or until coating is crisp and golden and beef is medium rare, turning once. (Do not overcook.) Remove steaks; keep warm. Repeat with remaining oil, if needed, and steaks.
4. Meanwhile combine sauce ingredients in small bowl. Serve with steaks.

This program is open to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status or any other legally-protected status. Persons with disabilities requiring alternative means for communication of program information should notify the County Extension Office as soon as possible prior to the event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry Clemons".

Jerry Clemons
County Extension Agent- Staff Chair
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