



BEEF BRIEFING

Cleveland County Beef and Forage Newsletter

Cleveland County Extension Service, P. O. Box 386, Rison, AR 71665

June, 2020

Using Cattle to Overseed Pastures

Ryan McGeeney, June 10, 2020, By the U of A System Division of Agriculture

Why am I getting this?

You are receiving this Newsletter because you live, work, own property, or have other vested interest in what is happening in Cleveland County. If this news brief has come to you by mistake or you no longer wish to receive it, please contact my office and let us know.

Feel free to contact Les Walz at lwalz@uaex.edu or 870-325-6321.

County Events:

- Covid-19 still has most activities cancelled and probably will through June.

All meetings and activities in this newsletter are offered to all interested persons without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. If you require a reasonable accommodation to participate or need materials in another format, contact your County Extension office as soon as possible. Dial 711 for Arkansas Relay.

It is perhaps the oldest, most “natural” way to distribute plant seeds across a field: allow cattle to graze, roam freely, and let nature take its course.

John Jennings, extension forage specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said farmers and ranchers have asked him many times over the years if there might be a way to harness this cycle for effective grassland management. We often get this question,” Jennings said. “Producers often report they heard of someone that has had success feeding seed to animals or mixing it in minerals to let the animals seed their pastures.”

Auburn University published a 1991 study examining the potential of livestock to spread toxic tall fescue seed. The researchers found that steers fed toxic fescue seed could pass seed in their manure with live endophyte for as long as 38 hours.

In 2017, researchers in North Carolina studied whether red clover seed, both coated and uncoated, could survive digestive tracts of cattle, after first mixing it with cattle mineral. The researchers found that coated seed had much lower survival than uncoated seed. After 14 days in contact with the mineral, 70 percent of the coated seed was not viable, and after 28 days all the coated red clover seed died. The uncoated seed survived for the full 28 days. Next, they fed red clover seed to steers and found that germination rate dropped from 96 percent before feeding down to 14 percent after passage through the animal.

“So the journey through the digestive tract is definitely hazardous for seed survival,” Jennings said.

The 2017 study also examined the digested seeds’ chances of germinating and becoming established if the manure was manually broken up. Researchers found that by dragging fields to break up manure pats, they improved establishment somewhat, but only to the tune of one red clover seedling per square foot, on average.

“Without dragging, few seedlings survived,” Jennings said. “In contrast, the researchers found that when red clover was frost-seeded, 20 seedlings per square foot became established in pastures. So establishment rates for feeding seed were 95 percent less than for frost-seeding.”

While the natural cycle of ingestion and elimination will help seed spread to some degree, it’s not a particularly efficient means of overseeding a pasture, Jennings said.

“All these studies showed that grazing animals can spread small amounts of viable seed that can become established in pastures,” he said. “But germination rates after digestive tract passage were in the range of 11-14 percent, and red clover seedling survival rates were about 95 percent lower than for direct planting methods.

“Animal dispersal of seed is a no-cost natural method that can be helpful if abundant seed is available in pastures,” he said. “But feeding limited amounts of expensive, purchased seed is a very inefficient way to overseed pastures with improved forages.”

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit www.uaex.edu.



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

Cleveland Co. Beef Briefing

Pg. 2

Bahiagrass for Forage

Bahiagrass is grown primarily for pasture, but it may also be used for hay. It is very drought tolerant and can survive well on dry, rocky, shallow sites where even bermudagrass grows poorly. Bahiagrass is easy to maintain because it is tolerant of close grazing, low fertility and is generally free from diseases or insect pests. Weed invasion tends to be lower in Bahiagrass compared to bermudagrass due to its extremely dense sod. It is also more shade tolerant than bermudagrass. Hay quality and yield are generally lower than for other forage grasses at similar levels of forage maturity. However, it does respond well to improved grazing and fertility management.



Calendar

The following are management considerations in “**June/July**” for Pasture and Beef Management.

Pasture:

- Last chance to plant bermuda sprigs.
- Rotate grazing on summer pastures.
- Keep record of harvested hay or seed and forage test.
- Soil test for fall plantings.

Beef Management:

- Treat for external parasites.
- Breed cows.

Check us out on  at
UAEX Cleveland County

Fertility Management for Bahiagrass:

It is always good to obtain a **soil analysis** before any fertility work is done on grazing or hay pastures. Bahiagrass stands produce a dense sod with large storage reserves of energy which can support regrowth following abusive grazing, severe drought or other disturbances. This dense sod allows Bahia grass to take up large amounts of nitrogen and store this nutrient for later use.

If Bahiagrass is to be used as a **Pasture**, apply all of the phosphate and potash recommended by soil analysis and 60 to 80 pounds of nitrogen in the spring soon after the grass begins to grow. An additional 60 to 80 pounds of nitrogen should be applied in early to mid-June.

If Bahiagrass is to be used as a **Hay Crop** and cut three to four times a year, apply 300 to 400 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year. If only one or two cuttings are planned, about 200 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year should be adequate. Use these rates in split applications with no more than 100 pounds of nitrogen applied at any one time.

Be sure to contact your local County Extension Agent if you have further questions about controlling horn flies or if you have any other livestock questions that need answers.

Les Walz
County Extension Agent –
Staff Chairman



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System