

The Back Forty News



FULTON COUNTY U OF A COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE NEWSLETTER

April 2017



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From the County Agent's desk...

It appears that spring has sprung! The swings in temperatures have kept a lot of our pasture grasses confused as to whether or not it's time to wake up for the year, but I think we're finally there. Cool season forages, such as fescue, clover, and orchardgrass are fully out of dormancy, and bermudagrass is starting to wake up. It needs a solid week of 60 degree night temperatures to really get it going, but that's not far off. We may have seen our last frost, but there is still a possibility that we can have one all the way into late April. In fact, according to historical climate data, we're in an area that has a 10% chance of seeing a frost after April 15th. It's happened before, and many folks know it as "blackberry winter" because it occurs once blackberries are in bloom, which they probably aren't too from doing. If that happens, expect to see bermuda set back.



Fertilizer needs to be going out now for cool season grasses, but it can probably wait another month or so for the bermudagrass. Any weed spraying that needs to be done should've probably already been completed for the cool season winter annual weeds, but the window for spraying the warm season species, such as woolly croton, ragweed, horsenettle, or any brush is still ahead. If you need recommendations on spraying, fertilizing, or new establishment, give us a call at 870-895-3301. See the article later in this newsletter concerning spring weed control for more information.

Spring Brucellosis (Bangs) Vaccinations

The spring brucellosis vaccinations are coming up soon. Livestock and Poultry technician, Franky Sharp, and I will tentatively be out on Tuesday, April 25th. If you have heifers to be vaccinated, please let us know by Tuesday, April 18th. Return the enclosed cut-out card to our office at P.O. Box 308, Salem, AR 72576 or call us at 870-895-3301. Include detailed directions to where the heifers will be. **Please don't assume that Franky and I necessarily know where you'll be. We both visit lots of farms throughout the year, and the names and locations start to run together sometimes!**

Vaccinations are free of charge. Heifers must be at least 4 months old but not older than 12 months old to be eligible for vaccination. We will use the same procedure as in the past and notify you by letter before you are scheduled for vaccinations.

You will need handling facilities to confine and work the calves. Also, you or a representative for you must be present at the time of vaccination or the technician will not vaccinate the heifers. If no one is there, we'll have to move along to the next stop. Remember, the time that we schedule for your stop could be give or take an hour or so. It depends on how fast or held up we are at prior stops.

Return by: _____

To: County Extension Agent – Staff Chair

In reply to your inquiry, I have _____ heifer calves, 4 to 12 months of age, which I would like to have vaccinated for Brucellosis (Bang's Disease).

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Community _____

Location of Farm _____

CES-443 Brucellosis Vaccination Reply Card (8-01)



Sericea Lespedeza: Friend or Foe?

Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent

There's no doubt that sericea lespedeza grows readily here in Fulton County. Whether or not that's a good or bad thing is up for debate. Just like anything, there are two sides to this coin.

On one hand, sericea is a legume that if grazed or hayed when very immature and tender, is a highly nutritious legume. In a study done in Alabama back in 2004, 16 weaned steers were split into two groups and were fed either sericea or bermudagrass hay with equal supplementation from soy hulls over a 49 day feeding period. Those on the sericea hay gained an average daily gain of approximately 0.11 lbs./day more, while consuming roughly 4.5 lbs. less per head/day. Both the gain and the intake are significant amounts. In just 49 days, the sericea group ate 1764 lbs. less than the bermudagrass group. That's roughly two bales. Also, they gained a total of 43 lbs. of more beef. Scatter those numbers out over an even larger herd, and you can start to see the difference. Let's say that a crop of 75 steers are fed sericea hay and fed for 70 days. Now, we're looking at an intake net difference of 23,625 lbs. of hay (4.5 lbs. x 75 head x 70 days), or roughly 30, 800 lb bales. And, for total gains? An additional 577.5 lbs. (.11 x 75 head x 70 days). If we figure on a price of around \$150/cwt, we're talking about an additional \$866 value. Just some food for thought.



However, managing sericea for hay is a little trickier. As with any forage, if it gets too mature, the quality can drop drastically. For sericea, that means getting it cut when it is no taller than 18 inches. And, that happens very quickly when temperatures warm in late May/early June. Also, as is the case with legumes, the leaves will shatter very easily. Sericea will dry in about half the time it takes other forages. If allowed to dry too long, you'll wind up with a hay bale full of stems. A common means of haying sericea lespedeza is to cut it in the morning, give it 1 day to dry, and rake and bale the following morning when there is still dew on it, before it has completely, 100% cured. However, one knows the risks of baling hay too green as well – mold and chance of combustion, so there's a moisture window there that must be hit. Too wet and you get all the

associated problems with green hay. If it lies out too long, you'll wind up with a hay bale of unpalatable, non-nutritious stems.

Another big benefit to sericea lespedeza is its tannin content. High tannin content forages help minimize the internal parasites (worms) in livestock, something that sheep and goat producers have known for a long time. If it's being grazed, the same rules apply as they do for hay. The stocking rate has to be right or else sericea will run off and leave them, getting too mature to be of any benefit. Not to mention, if allowed to, sericea can be highly competitive, choking out other desirable grasses.

Now, for the cons...and what to do about it if you want to control it. Sericea can absolutely take over a pasture or hayfield. It can get by on lower fertility fields, and it is a prolific reseeder. Over time, a pasture that isn't managed will wind up with only sericea and not much of anything else. It will shade out other forages, leaving behind lots of bare ground once it is gone. As mentioned before, the stocking rate has to be right to keep it in check. If it's not grazed by the time it gets above 10-12" tall, it becomes mostly useless for grazing.

Sericea is easily controlled, but the timing has to be right. Herbicide should be applied when plants are 12-15" tall, before they bloom. In fescue fields, apply 1.5-2.0 pints/acre PastureGard HL. Remedy at 1-2 pints/acre works well too. In fields that are primarily bermudagrass and if you have access to a boom sprayer, metsulfuron 60 DF at 1.0 oz./acre is excellent on sericea. Metsulfuron will harm fescue, though. As always, use a non-ionic surfactant at 0.25-0.50% of tank volume. Spray volumes need to be at least 10 gallons per acre. If you need any help calibrating a sprayer or calculating a treatment for a given field, don't hesitate to give me a call, and I'll be glad to come out.

So, all that to say, "Work with what you have." We obviously don't recommend that anyone go out and disk up their established bermudagrass or fescue/clover pastures just to plant sericea lespedeza, but if it's a problem on your place, there might be some scenarios where it can be utilized. For more information, give us a call at 870-895-3301.

Forages Lime Demonstration Update

Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent

Some of you will remember that we have a long term pasture liming project to look at varying rates of ag and pelletized lime and their effects on soil pH. As of this past January, we've passed the 1 year mark on this project, and we intend to continue it for 2 more years.

**Fulton County
Cooperative Extension Service**

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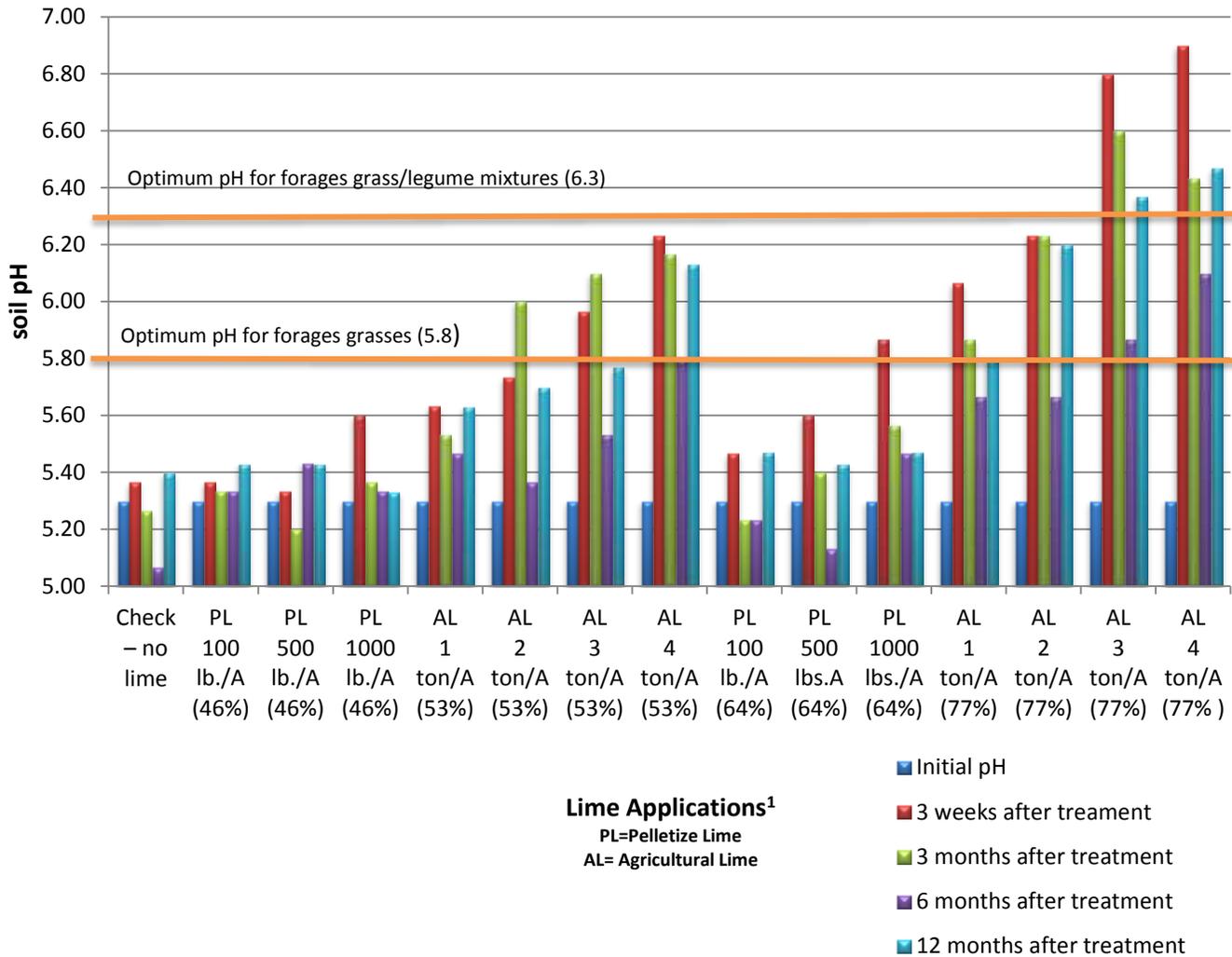
pH is perhaps the 2nd most limiting factor to forage growth in our area, just behind rainfall. But, unlike precipitation, it is one we can actually control, and doing so in an effective economical way is one of the foundations of a good farm forage program. A quality liming is a big investment, so we want to get it right.

These plots initially sampled out to an average pH of 5.3 back in January 2016, and the soil test recommended 2 tons lime/acre. This recommendation reflects a liming material with an ECCE % of 47% (average Arkansas lime quality). As you can see, treatments 2-8 are very close to that; 9-15 were applied with significantly higher quality lime.

A soil pH of 5.3 is below what we would be ideal for grass growth, and well below what we would like it to be for forage legumes. So, it was an ideal spot for some test plots. The lime applications (table below) were made in late January 2016, and to date, follow up sampling has been done at 3 weeks, 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months after the initial lime application. The current results are in Chart 1 on the next page.

<u>Treatment</u>	<u>Lime rate (lbs/acre)</u>	<u>Cost/Acre</u>	<u>Treatment</u>	<u>Lime rate (lbs./acre)</u>	<u>Cost/Acre</u>
1. Check – no lime	0	n/a	9. Pelletized lime (64% ECCE)	100	\$10.00
2. Pelleted lime (46% ECCE)	100	\$11.20	10. Pelletized lime (64% ECCE)	500	\$50.00
3. Pelleted lime (46% ECCE)	500	\$56.00	11. Pelletized lime (64% ECCE)	1000	\$100.00
4. Pelleted lime (46% ECCE)	1000	\$112.00	12. Ag lime (77% ECCE)	2000	\$40.00
5. Ag lime (53% ECCE)	2000	\$10.30	13. Ag lime (77% ECCE)	4000	\$80.00
6. Ag lime (53% ECCE)	4000	\$20.60	14. Ag lime (77% ECCE)	6000	\$120.00
7. Ag lime (53% ECCE)	6000	\$30.90	15. Ag lime (77% ECCE)	8000	\$160.00
8. Ag lime (53% ECCE)	8000	\$41.20			

Chart 1. Forage lime demonstration soil pH 3 wks, 3mo, 6mo, and 12 mo after application



¹Percentage values on x-axis represent the ECCE (Effective Calcium Carbonate Equivalent) of the liming material

Now, at the 12 months after application, the soil pH is about where we'd expect it to settle, but there can be a few takeaways. By and large, the pelletized lime, at the rates applied, does not match the neutralizing power of the ag lime. One of the claimed benefits of pelletized lime is that it works faster and that less can be applied. Thus far, this study does not support that. Pelletized lime plots have failed to reach the optimum

pH of 5.8. The only exception is the highest rate of 1000 lbs./acre with the higher quality pelletized lime (64% ECCE). The pH was raised to 5.8 at the 3 week mark but had fallen back down to below 5.5 at the 12 month mark. It should be noted that the 1000 lbs./acre rate of pelletized lime would also come at a cost of \$100/acre.

The 46% ECCE ag lime treatment at the soil test recommendation of 2 tons/acre, at the 12 month mark, tested out to just below the recommended 5.8 pH. All treatments have rebounded from the dip they exhibited at the 6 month mark. Those samples, indicated by the purple bars were taken in August when soil moisture was low when we might expect to see soil pH test somewhat lower.

For more information on soil testing and liming, give us a call at 870-895-3301.

4-H Rabies Clinic

The annual 4-H rabies clinic will be held at the Salem High School parking lot on Saturday, April 22nd from 8 a.m. – 10 a.m. in conjunction with Shaw Veterinary Clinic. Vaccines available will be rabies for \$10, distemper/parvo for \$15 dollars, and feline distemper for \$15. Remember, dogs must be on a leash and cats in a carrier or just left in the vehicle. We may have a heavy turnout, so please be patient once you arrive.

Half of the profits from these vaccinations will go to support the Fulton County 4-H program. For more information, call the Fulton County Extension Office at 870-895-3301. Thank you, and we hope to see you on April 22nd!



Brad Runsick

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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