FROM THE COUNTY AGENT’S DESK...

We’ve been fortunate to have a fairly steady does of precipitation from July through September. The northern part of the county went on a little dry spell there in July and August, but it was nothing like 2011-2012. Hopefully, grass stands are in good shape. Bermuda is starting to slow down, but fescue is making its fall return. Good management via strip grazing or stockpiling can make it last well into winter.

And, speaking of winter, I want to let everyone know that I will be out of the office for a good portion of November-January. I’ll be taking some leave time to be with my wife and our new arrival, Kate, who’s planning on showing up sometimes in early November. Who knows? She could be a future county agent in the making. As such, if anyone needs help during that time, feel free to email me at brunsick@uaex.edu or contact one of the agents in the surrounding counties. They’ll be glad to help...
you in my absence. We'll get you an answer to your questions one way or the other.

Sharp County Agent, Joe Moore - (870) 994-7363

Izard County Agent, Michael Paskewitz - (870) 368-4323

Baxter County Agent, Mark Keaton - (870) 425-2335

**Fall Armyworms – Identification, Scouting, and Control**

Adapted from Fact Sheet 7083, Managing Armyworms in Pastures and Hayfields

It’s that time of year, and I’ve already gotten several reports from within Fulton County. Fall armyworms are here. Fall armyworms typically affect bermudagrass more so than other species, but they will also feed on winter annuals, fescue, and orchardgrass.

The first thing you’ve got to be able to do is identify them. Most everyone knows what an armyworm looks like, but there are a few other caterpillars out there that look similar.

When newly hatched, the fall armyworm larva is light green to cream-colored with a dark head capsule and measures approximately 1/16 inch long. As the larva feeds and molts, it becomes darker with light-colored lines down the sides of its body. The head capsule is dark with a light-colored Y mark on the front. In addition, the top portion of the next to last abdomen segment has four small dots. The inverted Y on the head capsule (Figure 1) and four dots on the abdomen are good characteristics to distinguish the fall armyworm from the true armyworm (Figure 2). A fully grown fall armyworm larva is about 1½ inches long.

Figure 1: Inverted “Y” on the head of fall armyworm

Figure 2: Fully grown fall armyworm larva. Note set of four dots on the end of the abdomen.
As with many forage pests, they are best scouted for early in the morning before the sun gets up much or in the late afternoon. They can be hard to find during the day when they'll bury up in the thatch layer. Typically, we say that when there are more than 3 armyworms per square foot, then it’s time to do something about it.

First of all, if this is a field that you’re considering cutting the hay off of, go ahead and do it. The caterpillars will stop eating, for the most part, once the grass has been cut. In this case, save the expense of spraying it. Also, if you’ve got plenty of grazing left and can afford to lose it, then I’d probably just recommend letting the armyworms have it. Take that up with your neighbors though, too. Fall armyworms, unlike true armyworms in the spring, do not overwinter here, so once we have a good spell of cold weather, we won’t see many more problems with them. Due to their reproduction and movement, we do tend to see fall armyworm problems in waves every 30 days or so. With the first reports occurring within the last week and if we were to have a late first frost, we could see another round of them in mid-October. So, it’ll be important to remain vigilant in your scouting.

But, if you don’t plan to hay the field or are willing to let them armyworm horde feast on your pasture buffet, then controlling them with an insecticide can be a cheap option. Insecticides containing lambda-cyhalothrin will be the cheapest option at a cost of around $3.5/acre. They do require a license to buy, and they only provide control for a few days. And, they don’t have a grazing restriction. Another option would be Prevathon (chlorantraniliprole). It is a little more expensive (around $10/acre) but it does provide longer, residual control of around 10 days. It does not require a license to buy, and it has no grazing restriction either. Liquid Sevin (carbaryl) is another that doesn’t require a license. It has a 14 days grazing restriction, so you’d have to hold off for two weeks. That’s not usually practical for most farmers. Mustang Max (zeta-cypermethrin) is another that does require a license but does not have a grazing restriction.

As always, the label is law. Follow the label. Not all formulations are concentrated the same, so know what you’ve got and how much to put out. Also, with these lower rates/acre of chemical and the fact that you’re dealing with an insecticide (which tend to be more toxic) instead of an herbicide, it is important to be properly calibrated and use proper protective equipment. If you need help with calibration or with determining application rates, give me a call. Or, if you need help identifying fall armyworms or deciding if they’ve reached a threshold that justifies a spray application, give me a ring.

**Private Applicator Training (PAT) for Restricted Use Pesticides**

Local farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural producers who wish to renew an expiring pesticide license or receive a first time private pesticide applicator license will have the opportunity to receive the required training. Some of the folks that are up for recertification will have gotten a letter from the State Plant Board notifying them that their certification is up. If you are receiving this letter, then according to our records and the Arkansas State Plant Board, your license is about to expire.
The training will be held in Salem on Tuesday, October 21st, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. at the Fulton County Fairgrounds in the Hickinbotham-Miller building.

Pesticide Applicator Training is approximately a two-hour course to certify Arkansas agricultural producers who wish to purchase and apply Restricted Use Pesticides (RUP’s). However, the information presented could also be useful for anyone interested in learning more about pesticide regulations, labeling, application equipment and safety issues. This training is NOT for certification of commercial (for-hire) pesticide applicators!

There is a $10 per person fee which must be paid at the door at the time of training. This fee is not related to the licensing fees charged by the State Plant Board. It is only for the training. The fee for the license is $10 for one (1) year or $45 for five (5) years. That amount you will pay in later to the State Plant Board, not the Fulton Co. Extension Office. Checks or exact cash preferred.

**Spring Bangs Vaccinations**

The fall brucellosis vaccinations are coming up soon. Myself and Livestock and Poultry technician, Franky Sharp, will tentatively be out on Monday, October 27th and Wednesday October 29th. Typically, we’ll do them on a Friday and a Thursday morning if we have more than we can get in one day. If you have heifers to be vaccinated, please let us know by Wednesday, October 22nd. 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.
Fall Beef Cattle Management Tips (adapted from Extension Animal Science Blog entitled: Beef Cattle Tips – September 2014)

Tips for Spring Calving Herds:

- Cow herd performance is an opportunity to use production data to aid in replacement heifer selection or cull cows due to poor performance. A herd performance test involves weighing cows and calves, frame and muscle scoring calves and body condition cows.

- Walk through your cattle working facilities and take note of repairs and maintenance before fall weaning. Test all weak spots. These are supposed to be “working” facilities not “work-out” facilities. Facilities should be maintained for your safety and well as safety for your cattle.

- Start making plans for weaning calves. Retained ownership can often increase gross income, but to be profitable, cost of feed cannot be too excessive. Hay and supplement based programs are more costly than pasture and supplement programs, so good fall pasture management is important.

- Consider fence line weaning suckling calves. This reduces stress on the cows and calves. In addition calves continue to gain weight and respiratory disease is greatly reduced compared to conventional weaning. Training cattle to respect electric fencing prior to weaning can facilitate the weaning process. Fenceline weaning also allows high-quality pastures to be used as weaning facilities in place of dusty drylots.

- Implement a precondition program. Precondition programs include weaning calves at least 45 days to sale or according to the requirements of the specific preconditioning program, castrating bull calves, dehorning if necessary and a vaccination program. Preconditioned calves will sell for higher selling price. Remember to follow BQA guidelines when giving vaccinations.

- Pregnancy tests all cows. Cull all open cows and cull all cows with physical problems such as bad eyes, poor udders, lameness, missing teeth, etc.

- Select replacements heifers based on pre-weaning performance and phenotypic expression. Also, select heifers that were born early in the calving season.

- Vaccinate heifers for brucellosis.
• Forage test and plan for winter feeding program.

**Tips for Fall Calving Herds:**

• Cows should be calving. Check cows often throughout the calving season. Check first calf heifers more often.
• Vaccinate replacement heifers 30 to 60 days before the breeding season.
• Evaluate and select sires for breeding season.
• Take care of newborn calves; dip navel, ear tag, castrate bull calves, etc.
• Forage test and plan for winter feeding program.
• Be on the alert for prussic acid poisoning.

**Forage/Grazing Management Tips:**

**Planting of winter annual grass forages**

• Plant small grains such as rye, wheat, or oats. Provide forage for grazing between November and March.

**Establishment of winter annual legume forages**

• Legumes such as crimson clover, arrowleaf clover, and hairy vetch potentially provide multiple benefits, including grazing and improving soil fertility.
• Planting in middle to late September, in southern Arkansas until middle of October.
• Legumes can be no-till drilled into warm-season grass stubble (bermudagrass).
• No-till drills need to be kept clean and in good working order to plant at consistent depth and seeding rates.

**Plant forage brassicas: turnip, turnip hybrids, or rape:**

• Plant between August 25 – mid September.
• Seeding rate: 2-3 lbs/ac if planting with ryegrass or small grains; 5 lbs/ac for pure stands.
• Grazing turn-in 14-16"; if regrowth is desired rotate livestock out at 6-8".

Fescue
• Stockpile fescue for winter grazing.

• Clip or graze fescue pastures to 4” stubble by September 1 and fertilize with 50-60 lbs/acre of nitrogen.

• Defer grazing until December 1.

• Strip-grazing will yield twice as many grazing days as will giving access to the whole pasture.

**Bermudagrass Winter Pasture**

• Prepare bermudagrass pastures for interseeding ryegrass or small grains to use as winter pasture.

• Graze bermudagrass to a 2-3” height in September.

• Plant winter annuals with no-till drill or broadcast/drag in early October.

• Plant small grain at 100 lbs/acre. Plant ryegrass at 20 lbs/acre.

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Brad Runsick  
Fulton Co. Extension  
CEA-Agriculture/4H  
870-895-3301  
brunsick@uaex.edu

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