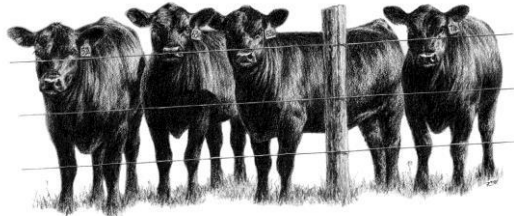


The Back Forty News



FULTON COUNTY U OF A COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE NEWSLETTER

In this Issue.....

- From the County Agent's Desk
- Poor Hay Crop
- Gardening in 2020
- Mystery Seeds
- Controlled Calving Seasons
- COVID-19



From the County Agent's desk...

Summer has finally made its glorious appearance and yes, it's HOT and HUMID! The continuous rain that was falling in May and June has shut off and the cooler temperatures have been pushed out by high pressure systems moving into the state. But, just because it is summer, doesn't automatically mean rainfall stops. It's just harder to come by and is normally very isolated. For example, almost 3 inches of rain was recorded near Sturkie a couple of weeks ago, while here in Salem, it rained enough to barely settle the dust. That's a big difference in a span of only 10 miles and that's usually the story when it comes to precipitation this time of year. Conversely, from June-October, tropical systems from the Gulf of Mexico will occasionally (with a big emphasis on occasionally) push this direction and can deliver much needed rainfall when things start to get dry.

Speaking of rain, hay season started back in April and May and yields from the first cutting were "average" compared to years past. When it came to quality, numbers ranged from 7.0 - 9.0 CP (Crude Protein) and 51 - 58 TDN (Total Digestible Nutrients). Hay from the first cutting will consist of primarily cool season grasses and legumes such as fescue, orchardgrass, and clover. By the second hay cutting, focus shifts to our warm season grasses such as Bermuda, Crabgrass,

Johnsongrass, and warm season Natives. These forages generally provide a higher CP and TDN content versus our cool season forages, but to check, I encourage you to get your hay tested. Whether you bale it yourself or purchase it from other producers, testing gives you the TRUE answer on quality and if additional supplements are needed during the winter feeding months. For those of us who don't cut hay and are only grazing pastures, now would be a great time to hook the bush-hog up and clip pastures that have not been utilized in the last few months. (Make sure to raise your bush-hog up though as you only want to trim your pasture, not give it a buzz cut.) Clipping is important because tall stems from matured grasses such as fescue and johnsongrass make it difficult for livestock to effectively graze. Clipping will also break the canopy allowing for more sunlight to penetrate desirable forages. This will provide more effective plant growth.

So far, 2020 has been one of those years where we have been looking for either the "reset" or "fast forward" button. The problem though, nobody has found either one. With COVID-19 present, the way we function in society has changed dramatically and has certainly affected us in our personal and work lives. Something else I have noticed, and maybe it is just me, but time has sure flown by since January 1st. This can be seen as good or bad, but now that we are halfway through the year, we are closer to 2021. Maybe the new year will be the "reset" or "fast forward" button we have all been seeking. In the meantime, hang in there! As producers, we have faced many challenges and have pushed on through! I am confident we can take our experiences from a production standpoint and use them to get through this COVID pandemic as well. Stay safe Fulton County, and as always, please don't hesitate to give me a call with any questions. I am 100% committed to helping you achieve your production goals.

Poor Hay Crop?

Dr. John Jennings, Extension Forage Specialist

The 2020 hay season has been fickle at best. Early cool weather was great for fescue, ryegrass, and clover, but unfortunately rainy weather caused harvest delays leading to low hay quality due to the advanced forage maturity. Cool temperatures also delayed early growth of bermudagrass and other warm-season forages causing yields to be lower than normal at this point of the summer. Many producers have experienced poor hay yields this year. Conversations eventually turn to options for more hay or to reduce the hay requirement this winter. Based on University of Arkansas research, several options can be considered for fall and winter forage that can stretch that short hay crop. Many of these options have been proven in the 300 Days Grazing Program.

Recently a producer commented that he thought the 300 Days Grazing Program only worked in north Arkansas. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Actually, most of the forage practices can be implemented more easily in SOUTH Arkansas due to the forage base and climate. Dr. Paul Beck's research at the SWREC station at Hope conclusively showed that adding three simple practices to a bermudagrass pasture base can extend a grazing season to well over 300 days. But, each of those practices require advance planning so don't wait until you need forage to realize you didn't start soon enough.

On the next page you will find 10 forage options that can extend the grazing season based on our research and demonstrations. Many of them can be planted in mixtures to gain a longer productive season. For example, spring oats or forage brassica can be mixed with annual ryegrass. The oats or brassica provide fall grazing and the ryegrass provides grazing the next spring. Seeding rates of each species in a mixture can be reduced by 25-50% to achieve a final seeding rate per acre. Generally nitrogen fertilizer should be applied at the time of planting at 50 lbs N per acre. (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Warm Season Forage Options

<u>FORAGE</u>	<u>START/PLANT DATE</u>	<u>SEEDING RATE</u>	<u>PLANTING METHOD</u>	<u>FERTILIZER REC.</u>	<u>YIELDS</u>	<u>POTENTIAL GRAZING DATE</u>
Stockpiled Bermuda	Clip /Graze by Aug 1	N/A	N/A	50-60 lbs N/acre	3000-4000 lbs/acre	October 15
Browntop Millet	Aug 20 – Sept 1	25 lbs/acre	Tilled or Drilled	50-60 lbs N/acre	2500 lbs/acre	October 1
Sorghum/Sudan	Aug 20 – Sept 1	25 lbs/acre	Tilled or Driller	50-60 lbs N/acre	3000 to 3500 lbs/acre	October 15
Pearl Millet	Aug 20 – Sept 1	25 lbs/acre	Tilled or Drilled	50-60 lbs N/acre	3000 to 3500 lbs/acre	October 15
Corn	Aug 20 – Sept 1	50 lbs/acre	Tilled or Drilled	50-60 lbs N/acre	2600 to 3200 lbs/acre	October 15

Cool Season Forage Options

<u>FORAGE</u>	<u>START/PLANT DATE</u>	<u>SEEDING RATE</u>	<u>PLANTING METHOD</u>	<u>FERTILIZER REC.</u>	<u>YIELDS</u>	<u>POTENTIAL GRAZING DATE</u>
Stockpiled Fescue	Clip/ Graze by Sept 1	N/A	N/A	50-60 lbs N/acre	2000 to 3500 lbs/acre	Dec 1
Spring Oats	Aug 20 – Sept 15	100 lbs/acre	Tilled or Drilled	50-60 lbs N/acre	2200 to 3700 lbs/acre	Nov 15
Cereal Rye or Wheat	Aug 20 – Sept 15	100 lbs/acre	Tilled or Driller	50-60 lbs N/acre	1200 to 2000 lbs/acre	Dec 1
Ryegrass	Aug 20 – Sept 15	25 lbs/acre	Tilled or Drilled	50-60 lbs N/acre	450 to 1100 lbs/acre	Dec 1
Forage Brassica	Aug 20 – Sept 15	5 lbs/acre	Tilled or Drilled	50-60 lbs N/acre	1900 to 2900 lbs/acre	October 20

Consider rotational or strip grazing practices to get more grazing days per acre.

To calculate pasture set up for strip grazing or paddock size for your preferred pasture rotation, see our new calculators online at: <https://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/animals-forages/pastures/forage-calculators.aspx>.

Gardening in 2020

Cory Tyler – Fulton County Extension Agent

If there is one thing I know about the 2020 gardening year, I would say that it has been very productive. Take last year for reference. Around this time in 2019 I was receiving an abundance of phone calls about poor garden production. Now, don't get me wrong, I have still had some of those calls this year but, for the most part, it's all been good news. Turn the page to 2020, and COVID hit Arkansas around mid-March. Our ways of living changed and people were spending more time at home. Suddenly, farm and garden stores were being overran by people wanting vegetable seeds and potting mix and calls to my office increased due to home owners looking for further advice and information. People had really taken an interest in building up their home landscapes and gardens.

This pandemic got people to take advantage of their extra time at home and to shift focus on their landscape. It allowed individuals the time to fix and correct things that haven't worked in the past. Youth was out in the garden with their parents or grandparents and were taught skills that they had yet to acquire. It also encouraged people to sit down and research different practices, such as soil testing, proper spray schedules, irrigation, etc. to improve the quality of their landscape. All of that extra time, helped those gardens and flower beds to be successful. The most important thing though, people had a pretty good sense of pride when they picked that first tomato, squash, or pepper.

I encourage you to keep up all of your hard work for the rest of this year and into next year. Having said all of that, we are now entering into August. We have been spraying, weeding, picking, watering, fertilizing, and canning for the last few months. The good news is, there is still plenty of growing season left for our warm season vegetables. The bad news...we are in the hottest part of the year. So, with that in mind, here are a few things to consider:

- Keep yourself safe while outside. Choose times in the morning and evening to work in the yard or garden. There is no need being outside in the sweltering sun trying to weed your garden. Your safety comes first, so please use caution while out in the heat.
- Rainfall isn't as abundant this time of year so watering will be needed. Just keep in mind that your garden only needs an **inch to an inch and a half** of irrigated water per week. Spread that amount out equally over 7 days. If we do get a decent rainfall, hold off on the watering for 4-5 days. Overwatering is a big issue and results in a lot of problems with plants.
- When the end of gardening season comes, make sure to clean out the area. By doing so, you encourage a more sterile environment for the next growing season. Take all plant debris and dispose of it in a separate location.
- Consider sowing cover crops for the winter months. Cover crops can help with soil health by decreasing compaction and help prevent soil erosion.

Mystery Seeds

Did you receive a package of seeds you didn't order? Many Arkansans say they've received packages of seeds and other items with foreign return addresses. Some of these packages are marked as containing something other than what's in them. Don't open the packets inside. Don't plant or flush the seeds. Agriculture officials are concerned that the seeds may contain some exotic invasive species.

Be sure you report any unsolicited mailings to the Arkansas Department of Agriculture. Call the Plant Industries Division at 501-225-1598. You can also email Paul.shell@agriculture.arkansas.gov or Mark.stoll@agriculture.arkansas.gov.

Advantages of a Controlled Calving Season

Cory Tyler – Fulton County Extension Agent

If I were to tell you that 54.5% of beef cattle producers didn't have a set calving season, would you believe me? Maybe or maybe not, but that is the results from a USDA survey taken regarding producers beef cattle operations. Thinking of that number, producers need to keep in mind that the profitability of a cow-calf operation is getting harder to come by in today's market. Especially one that demands more heavier uniform calves. But, if we can strive to reduce the breeding and calving season, producers will be able to use their time more efficiently and become more profitable with their herd. When it comes to the advantages of a controlled calving herd, here is what you can expect to see:

- **It saves a multitude of time and work.** This is especially true when it comes time for calving, vaccinations, castration, ear tagging, pregnancy checking, weaning, etc.
- **It heightens the cattle feeding program.** When producers are feeding supplements to cattle in different breeding stages, some cattle receive more than they need while others aren't receiving enough.
- **You're producing more uniform and heavier calves that the market is demanding.**
- **Cattle graze forages more efficiently.** With that shorter breeding and calving season, your herd will better utilize warm and cool season forages during the peak of their quality and quantity.
- **Implementation of herd performance records.** This allows the producer to closely monitor which cows are performing and which ones need to go.
- **Reduction of calf mortality rates.** When you know your calving time frame, you can spend that time efficiently checking calving heifers and cows.

These are the most noticeable advantages, but there are still many more that could be added to the list. While every operation is different, these 6 will always be on the forefront. It takes some time to make the swing, but once you have it implemented, you will appreciate why the controlled system is more efficient. This is especially true when we talk about time and money. For those of you who are interested in making the shift but don't know where to start, give me a call. I would be more than glad to sit down with you and help steer you in the right direction. I also encourage you to talk to other producers in the county who have controlled calving operations. With their practices, you can get a feel for what changes you could generate on your farm to make it more profitable.

COVID-19

Everyone has to wear a mask. Well, almost everyone. The @CDC says children under age 2 should not wear a mask. In #Arkansas it's OK for children under 10 to be mask-free. <https://bit.ly/33bT7UG>

Find our #COVID19 resources here: <https://uaex.edu/covid19>.

#Arkansas #ProtectYourselfProtectOthers #MandatoryMasks





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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Salem, AR 72576

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Tyler'.

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