DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

Fulton County
Cooperative Extension Service
118 West Locust/PO Box 308 • Salem, AR 72576
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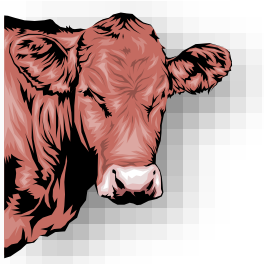
The Back Forty News

FULTON COUNTY U OF A COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE NEWSLETTER

January 2019



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From the County Agent's desk…

It's with a bit of "punch in the gut" feeling that I write this newsletter. By the time many Fulton County farmers will be reading it, I'll likely have worked my last day as the Fulton County Extension agent. Effective January 16th, I'll begin serving as the agent for Baxter County, following the retirement of long-time ag agent, Mark Keaton. Between living only 15 minutes from Mtn. Home, a wife teaching school in Norfork, and two girls who'll be going to school there, it's an opportunity I can't pass up.

I sincerely hope that during my time serving Fulton County, folks have learned something new or made their operations more profitable in some way, whether it came from this newsletter, Facebook, our Area Beef and Forage conferences, or just one on one farm visits and consultations. If there's any lag at all between my departure and the hiring of a new agent, please don't hesitate to get in touch if you ever need any assistance. The Fulton County office can forward your questions along

to me until someone new takes my place. The Baxter County Office's phone number is 870-425-2335. Thank you, again, for allowing me serve you these past 7+ years. With that, let's get into some winter production practices that might help you out getting through winter and heading into spring.

STOCKPILE FESCUE PROJECT RESULTS

The stockpile fescue project that we started back in late August/early September has since been turned in on, and here are the preliminary results. For now, we only have the yield results, but not quality yet. However, stockpile fescue that is started around the first of September will typically test out at around 20% crude protein and high 60s% TDN (energy) – more than good enough to meet lactating cows needs with no additional feed supplementation. We rarely, if ever, see hay tests that analyze out that good.

These 12 acres of stockpiled fescue yielded 2,900 lbs dry matter/acre. That's the equivalent of nearly four, 725 lb. round bales. The cost associated with the project was the nitrogen fertilizer application at a total of $35/acre and minimal diesel expense. So, in short, through stockpiling, the landowner is able to get the equivalent of 48 bales of hay for the cost of 12. Additionally, the intent is to strip graze across this field with temporary electric fence, making the grazing efficiency even better, as much as 70%. Losses associated with cutting, raking, baling, storing, and feeding hay often is much greater than just a 30% loss. And, don't forget that quality of the stockpile is far greater even above average hay. As of early December and just prior to turning in to graze, it tested at 16% crude protein and 63% TDN (energy). Better quality forage means that fall calving cows that are being bred back come back in heat earlier than those with poor body condition after being dragged down from a calf and consuming low quality forage.

On this project, we estimated 87 days grazing, saving $121.50/AU (animal unit) for a total saving of $1670, compared to feeding hay and supplement. An animal unit refers to 1000 lbs. of grazing livestock. This is used instead of a per head basis, since animals of different weights have different daily dry matter intakes.

FALL PLANTED SUMMER ANNUALS PROJECT

With this project at Glencoe, we planted three common summer annuals – pearl millet, browntop millet, and spring 'Jerry' oats. The details on this project were included in the last mailing of the 2018 Demonstration Report, but these yield results weren't complete at that time. The sprayed plots were suppressed with 1 quart/acre glyphosate prior to seeding. The results are as follows. Note: The crude protein and TDN samples were taken only from the plots that were first suppressed with glyphosate.

						% TDN **Total Digestible Nutrients (Energy)**
	Sprayed	Unsprayed	Sprayed	Unsprayed		
Browntop Millet	20″	13″	2010	1030	15.65%	
Pearl Millet	30″	12″	1850	320	16.69%	
Jerry Oat	10″	5″	710	90	24.06%	

WINTER TO-DO LIST

- Cattle energy needs are higher when it's wet and cold. Feed accordingly
- Be sure to winterize any and all pumps, sprayers, etc. Anything that has the potential to freeze up and break will.
- As long as the ground isn't frozen, winter is a great time to get out and get soil sampling done. Having results in January/February makes it a lot easier to plan versus waiting until April to take samples.
- Frost seeding of clover is a great way to improve forage quality next spring. Broadcasting clover seed onto snow is an excellent way to sow clover. As the snow

melts, the seed goes with it, allowing good seed-soil contact. Need to ensure that the pH and fertility is right before spending too much on seed.

- I know it seems early, but the time to spray is right around the corner. Thistles are easily controlled with 1 quart of 2,4-D amine per acre if sprayed in late Feb./early March. With the cold temperatures, it just takes a little longer to see results, but the herbicide will work.
- Applications of glyphosate (Roundup, Cornerstone, etc.) in late Feb. and early March will work wonders on cleaning up bermudagrass fields. It'll take care of all that cheat, ryegrass, and winter annual weeds which are stealing spring rain, nutrients, and sunlight from the Bermuda. Not to mention, removing those weeds gets the bermudagrass out of dormancy earlier, providing early grazing or hay cutting. The herbicide won't affect the dormant bermudagrass.

LATE WINTER–EARLY SPRING SPRAYING

Brad Runsick, CEA – Agriculture

It is only January, but now is the time to start thinking about spring weed control. Get out those sprayers, and make sure that everything is in working order because Mother Nature only leaves some short windows for spring spraying. Depending on temperatures, we're only about 6-10 weeks from late winter/early spring spraying. Winter annual weeds, such as buttercup, and perennials, such as thistles are just itching to germinate and/or greenup during this time. Here in about 6 weeks, a lot of producers will look out across their pasture as they drive by and say, "There's aren't any weeds out there. I believe I'll wait another month or so." However, underneath that dormant base of grass, little ½"- 1" winter annuals that have just started their lives and thistles rosettes would easily be controlled with 2,4-D.

There are several benefits to an early spraying. You'll reduce the nutrient and water competition with your desirable species, allowing them to kick off spring with some good greenup. Also, spraying these weeds when they're young and tender allows for lower rates of herbicide. A pint of 2,4-D will kill more seedlings now than it will in mid-April. The downside is: you may get another round of germination after your first spraying. If so, spray it again. A pint of 2,4-D amine is only about $3/acre chemical cost. You can curtail this, somewhat, by allowing as much winter annuals to germinate as possible before that first spraying. Just don't let the earliest germinating ones get much over 3-4". However, you probably need to plan on a mid-April to June spraying in addition to this one anyway to catch the ragweed, horse and bull nettle, wooly croton (goatweed), and Sericea lespedeza. If you need any help calibrating a sprayer, feel free to give me a call, and I can come out

and help you out. I do ask that everything be in working order when I get there. For more information concerning weed control or sprayer calibration, give us a call here at the Fulton Co. Extension Office at 870-895-3301.

BREEDING THE HEIFER FOR SPRING CALVING HERDS

Dr. Tom Troxel, Extension Beef Specialist (retired)

Due to the price of cattle and the excellent growing conditions, many cattle producers retain extra heifers to rebuild or to replace older cows in their herd. Raising high quality replacement heifers is an essential and major investment for the cow-calf producer. The replacement heifer becomes the genetic building block for the cow herd. With proper management a replacement heifer will become a fertile cow that produces a calf, annually, for a long time.

Many management steps and decisions must be made in the process of selecting and growing replacement heifers. Consequently, replacement heifers must pass a number of "production tests" to remain in the herd and, hopefully, become a member of the cow herd. Selection at weaning, development from weaning to first breeding, evaluation after first breeding and calving season and establishment of successful rebreeding are the "production tests" a heifer must pass. Heifers not meeting production targets should be culled at any point in the process.

Management from Breeding to Calving

For spring calving herds, this is the time of year to begin planning the breeding season for replacement heifers. Replacement heifers should be on a good health program. Contact your veterinarian to develop the right vaccination program for your replacement heifers.

Calving difficulty is of great concern with first-calf heifers, as it is the primary cause of calf losses at birth. The major causes of dystocia are an oversized calf or an undersized heifer. A large calf and/or a heifer with a small birth canal can cause calving problems. The general rule of thumb is that a female (heifer or cow) should be able to calve 8% of their body weight. Therefore, if a heifer weighs 900 lbs. at calving, she should be able to deliver a calf weighing 72 lbs. at birth. Two methods can be used to reduce the risk of calving difficulty. The first is to be sure the pregnant heifer is properly "grown-out" from breeding to calving. Pelvic area of heifers can be measured at yearling age, and those with small areas should be culled.

Another method of reducing dystocia is by reducing birth weights. Select low birth weight or high calving ease EPD bulls for breeding heifers. Birth weight information on a bull and his sire can be effective in reducing birth weights as well. Be very careful in selecting bulls if no prior

calving information is known. Many yearling bulls are used on heifers satisfactorily, but the old belief that a young bull will sire smaller calves is not true. To reduce the risk of injury, however, smaller bulls should be used. Bulls should not weigh more than 170% to 180% of the heifer's body weight. If heifers weigh 800 lbs. at the start of the breeding season, the bull selected to breed those heifers should not weigh more than 1,400 lbs.

It is recommended to breed replacement heifers 20 to 30 days before the cow herd. This permits more time and labor to be given to heifers during the calving season. Heifers can be watched more closely and assisted if necessary to reduce calf death losses. It also allows for a longer period from calving to rebreeding, which is needed by first-calf heifers to regain body condition and initiate estrous cycles.

The breeding season for replacement heifers should be approximately 45 days. Heifers should be checked for pregnancy 60 to 90 days after the end of the breeding season, and all open heifers should be culled. This increases selection pressure for high fertility and also ensures a short first-calving season.

Heifers need to gain 0.8 to 1.0 lb. per day from the time they are bred until calving. This can usually be achieved on pasture and mineral supplementation alone. At calving, heifers should weigh 85% of their expected mature body weight and be in good body condition (BCS = 6 to 7). If heifers are in thin body condition, they should be placed on a higher level of nutrition. It is difficult to improve heifer body condition as calving approaches, and it is especially difficult after calving. Improving condition will improve colostrum production and quality, will decrease post-calving anestrous period and increase the livability of their calves.

"Starving" heifers prior to calving does not reduce calving problems. Underfeeding can cause poor milk production, reduced weaning weights, lower rebreeding rates and increased calving difficulties. It also is not desirable for heifers to be over conditioned. Heifers which are over conditioned at calving have greater calf losses, excessive feed cost, depressed milk production, decreased life span and rebreeding difficulties.

Summary

Genetically speaking the replacement heifer should be the best animal on the farm and, therefore, is the genetic building block for the future. Taking extra management steps such as selecting a low birth weight bull, breeding heifers 20 to 30 days before the cow herd, managing heifers so they continue to gain 0.8 to 1.0 lb. per day until calving, and maintain good body good body condition (BCS = 6 to 7) will allow the heifer to perform at her genetic potential.

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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.

The training will be held in Salem on February 26th, 2019 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!

The cost is now **$20 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.

Brad A. Runsick

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