

The Forager

THE NORTH CAROLINA FORAGE AND GRASSLAND COUNCIL
IN COOPERATION WITH
THE NRCS -GRAZING LANDS CONSERVATION INITIATIVE AND
NCSU-NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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The North Carolina Forage and Grassland Council, N.C. Cattleman's Association, and Amazing Grazing announce summer grazing workshops

The Carolinas are blessed with an excellent climate that can provide a year-round grazing system. However, we are also cursed with a forage base of endophyte infected fescue or bermudagrass. Our current forage based does a good job of maintaining brood cows, but getting performance on calves after weaning often requires significant levels of supplementation, and the cost of supplemental feed has skyrocketed.

Producers desiring to add value to calves after weaning without significant supplementation need to seek out alternatives to the traditional forages and management techniques. The North Carolina Forage and Grassland Council has teamed with Amazing Grazing to present summer grazing demonstrations across the state using non-traditional forages. These forages include warm season native grasses, summer annual mixes, and perennial mixtures. The grazing demonstrations are underway, and workshops have been scheduled for each site so local producers can come and see a different way of doing things. Each site participating in this project is carrying cattle all the way to harvest, so participants in these workshops will also learn more about how to make those programs successful. Each workshop will begin with a hamburger dinner at 5:30 pm, followed by a tour and discussion at 6:30 pm. There will be no fee for the workshops, but participants should call in or e-mail to reserve their spot for dinner.

Dates and contact information for each workshop include:

August 8. Hardy Creek Farms (Gardner Morgan), Stanley County. To register contact Steve Lemons, (704) 983-3987, Steve_Lemons@ncsu.edu

August 16. Warren Wilson College, Buncombe County. To register contact Ethan Henderson, (828) 255-5522, Ethan_Henderson@ncsu.edu

August 20. Piney Woods Farm (Burton Lanier), Pender County. To register contact: Abby Dilley, (910) 259-1235, Abby_Dilley@ncsu.edu

August 27. Rogers Cattle Company (Johnny and Sharon Rogers), Person County. To register contact: Kim Woods. (336) 599-1195, Kim_Woods@ncsu.edu

September 4. Center for Environmental Farming Systems, Wayne County. To register contact: Lisa Forehand, 919-513-0954, Lisa_Forehand@ncsu.edu



A Few Comments on 2013

By Mark Hucks, President NCFGC

As a child I can remember some of the old timers labeling certain years by events that happened. Some examples might be the "Year of the big freeze or the Year of the big drought". I think we might want to label 2013 as the "Year of the many rains". I was speaking with one fellow recently that told me he had received 50 inches of rain since January 1, 2013. He said 20 inches of rain came in June. You only have to watch the evening news to know this is true. All of us can relate to certain problems associated with all this moisture.

Since this is a Forager newsletter, let's look at some of the problems that this amount of water might cause for the grazer. The first thing we might think, it is hard to make hay with it raining every other day. Several folks have told me they were short on hay and the hay made so far wasn't very good because it had rained on it. A second thing, the tobacco around the house is looking yellow. A lot of the nitrogen fertilizer is gone, washed out. If this is happening in one crop it is happening in another. Nitrogen is the building block of proteins.

Excess water can affect the quality of our forage. Number three, several folks have told me their wheat has sprouted in the head before it was combined. One fellow that usually combines his own rye seed told me he wasn't able to save any seed this year. If farmers are having a problem combining small grain seed, is this going to carry over to availability for seed dealers.

This year we need to revisit some of the basic management practices. Have your hay tested for nutrient content. If you purchase hay, purchase with a nutrient analysis. Soil test your pastures. Soil testing will not tell you how much Nitrogen leached, but it will prepare you for fall plantings and stockpiling fescue. Stockpile fescue while making sure you utilize your warm season grasses first. Finally locate winter annual seed early. Make sure you have a germination test and get them planted in a timely matter to get fall grazing.

These are my best thoughts on preparing for winter. Good Luck

Overview of Native Warm- Season Grass Workshop

By Eddie Leagans

A Native Warm Season Grasses Workshop was conducted June 18 at Mount Ulla, North Carolina. There were approximately 125 folks in attendance. Dr. Patrick Keyser, Professor and Director of the Center for Native Grassland Management at the University of Tennessee, was a major speaker. The workshop consisted of a morning classroom session and an afternoon farm visit. The afternoon farm visit was to Oscho Deal's Circle D Farms. There were three stations to observe their successful native grass program.

Highlights include:

- Interest is picking up with these grasses (switchgrass, bluestem, gama grass, etc.)
- Trials show double the livestock rate of gain verses toxic fescue
- Much more management is required for those of us with a "fescue mentality"

Some Observations:

- Weeds must be controlled before and during growth
- Grasses are slow to germinate
- Grass seeds must be planted in very firm shallow seedbed
- Growth will be more successful if not grazed during the first year of growth
- Graze down to 6-8 inches verses 3 inches for fescue
- Starting height for grazing should be 24-28 inches
- Provides excellent summer grazing

Native grasses are not for everyone, but they are a very viable alternative or addition to a forage program. In a post workshop survey, 95% of attending responded they had learned a great deal about (NWSG), 90% wanted to hear more, 75% planned to plant (NWSG). **CHECK THEM OUT.**

Overview of Piedmont Research Station Hay Day

By Eddie Leagans

April 17, 2013 was a very inviting Spring Day and brought approximately 140 people to the Piedmont Research Station outside Salisbury to learn about forages, especially the haying aspect. Joe Hampton Research Station Superintendent welcomed the group, outlining the day's events provided the rain would hold off. Attendees went to the field and observed blue, green, red and orange tractors pulling different discbines, flail cutters, discmowers, and haybines. Where else can you go and compare so many different pieces of hay equipment side by side?

Dr. Matt Poore, NCSU Specialist, provided tips and reminders on producing top quality hay. In many case we know what to do, "but do we do it"?

Points made included:

- Hay is expensive
- Know your equipment costs - Soil tests/We need to return proper nutrients to the soil
- Know labor costs
- Manage risks - weather, rain, drought, maintenance and repairs
- Make high quality hay
- Cut at appropriate stage of maturity. **QUALITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN QUANTITY!**

Seed heads fully emerged is not good quality hay.

Sample your forage at a \$10 cost (a very good investment)
Lactating cows need 11% protein and 55-60% TDN (Total Digestible Nutrients)

After a delicious lunch we returned to the hayfield to observe different types of tedders and rakes at work. The hay was rolled and wrapped and some was even completely enclosed for the haylage effect.

We went home with our batteries charged for a successful haying season.

Report of the American Forage and Grassland Council's Summer Tour in Virginia

By V. Mac Baldwin

The American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) Summer Tour is held each year in conjunction with a host Forage Council. This year The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) hosted this tour on May 22-24. Peggy and I had the privilege to attend and represent the NCFG. There were approximately 100 attendees.

The tour took place within a 30 miles radius of Charlottesville mostly north and west. This is some of the most beautiful grazing country I have ever seen. The Tour headquarters and accommodations were at the Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria, Va. Graves Mountain Lodge is very rustic--but very nice. I found it relaxing to have no TV, no telephones, no cell phone coverage, and no noise. The food and fellowship were great.

The first stop was Eldon Farm, a 7200 ac commercial/calf operation with mostly Ky 31 fescue. John Genho, Ranch Manager, explained to us his biggest problem was getting his spring calving black cows rebred due to the fescue toxicity. He sold his calves as heavy stockers in the spring and fall in Tractor-Trailer lots to mid-western feedlots. The Ranch's handling facilities were home built and utilized the "Bud Box" system of entry. Cattle move safely, quietly, and quickly thru the facilities.

Another stop was Madison Wood Preservers in Madison, Va. They make about 7500 treated pine fence posts per day. During the debarking and milling operation, a photo is taken of each post and a computer determines if the post is true within a 1 inch variance over its total 7 or 8 ft length. If out of tolerance, the post is recycled and reduced to a smaller diameter.

The next day, one group went to Montpelier, the home place of President James Madison. Another group headed for Kenwood Dairy Farms and the Virginia Tech Northern Piedmont Research Center. Kenwood Dairy is a 5th generation operation near the City Limits of Orange, Va. Kenwood Dairy has a history of astounding conservation practices and has recently sold the Conservation Easements rights. Conservation Easements are strong in Virginia with sellable tax credits. By selling the tax credits, Kenwood was able to expand the operation and transition to the next generation with strong financials.

Dr. Allen Grant, Dean of the VT College of Agriculture and Life Sciences was our host at the Northern Piedmont Research Center at Orange, VA. Out of the many research project reviewed, it was a Ryegrass variety test project that really caught my attention. Current testing shows that Marshall Ryegrass is the top producer in Northern Virginia. Wow! I could have told them that for nothing. I have been using Marshall Ryegrass for over 20 years.

Cedar Springs Dairy Farm and the Duck Cattle Farm were afternoon stops in Madison County. Cedar Springs had a very impressive system of separating the solids from the liquids in their manure handling system. Effluent was pumped underground to their silage fields. The solids were held in a composting shed where their farm mortality was also composted.

The Duck Cattle farm was extremely large and beautiful operation. We saw 100's of cow/calf pairs of Angus cattle on maybe 2000ac. The farm was manicured with clean high tensile fencing and a graded farm road system that separated more grazing paddocks than I could count.

On Thursday evening, a great meal was served at the Graves Mountain Pavilion. Mr. Todd Haymore, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, did an outstanding job reporting on the state of Agribusiness in Virginia. He had a great sense of humor.

On Friday, the Lodge served a huge good-bye breakfast and the we traveled several miles to the Riverbend Forage Farm, owned and operated by the Coates family. Mike Coats and Sidney Coats showed their state-of-the art system for producing premium orchard grass hay. Mike uses a stout NH square baler equipped with a preservative spray system which allows him to bale at high moisture. He pulls a machine behind the baler that puts 10 square bales into a banded bundle that can be handled with forklifts. The hay is never touch with human hands.

In summary, it was a great summer tour--- we learned a lot--- we met a lot of new friends and it was well worth the money and the time. Lord willing, we plan to go on the AFGC Summer Tour next year. It will be hosted by the Louisiana Forage and Grassland Council. Come and go with us.





THE FORAGER

NCFGC

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To receive **The Forager** via email, or to submit a question or post an upcoming event: contact: ronnie@hardrockbeefcattle.com

N.C. Forage and Grassland Council Membership Form

Name _____ Name of Operation _____

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Occupation: Farmer ___ Industry ___ Agency ___ Other _____

PASTURE ACRES _____ HAY ACRES _____ Type(s) of Livestock _____

_____ I prefer to receive a **printed** copy of The Forager in my mailbox. _____ I prefer the Forager be e-mailed to me.

_____ Student—\$10 (High school or College)

_____ **Individual** — \$25 (producers, professional agricultural and industry personnel, etc.)

_____ **Corporate**— \$300 (businesses, organizations; manufacturers, etc.)

Make check payable to: N.C. Forage and Grassland Council Mail to: NCFGC 2228 N. Main St., Fuquay-Varina, NC 27526

2014 Midwinter Conferences Scheduled

The North Carolina Forage and Grassland Council has scheduled Midwinter Conferences for 2014. Please put these times and location on your calendar:

January 28 – Duplin County

January 29 – Iredell County

January 30 – Buncombe County

The keynote speaker this year is Dr. Greg Brann.

Dr. Greg Brann is the Grazing Lands Specialist in Tennessee. He works for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Nashville.

Dr. Brann can be reached at greg.brann@tn.usda.gov

(615) 277-2569 or (615) 330-0717 (cell)

(615) 277-2577 fax

Dr. Greg Brann

- B.S Degree in Plant Science, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- 35 years experience with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Certified Crop Advisor
- Outstanding Young Men of America
- Farm: 350 acre pasture, beef cows, stockers, goats, hair sheep, tobacco and Christmas trees
- American Sheep Industry Targeted Grazing Committee



The North Carolina Forage and Grassland Council is involved in promoting efficient, profitable production and utilization of Forage Crops. We do this by sponsoring workshops, farm tours and winter conferences. If you would like to be a part of this, consider joining the NCFGC. Memberships make this possible.