

Toxic Tall Fescue Renovation Schools

Livestock producers have known for many years the animal production issues associated with toxic Kentucky 31 (KY-31) tall fescue. The endophyte fungus that grows between infected plant cells produces chemicals harmful to animals, but the fungus is beneficial to the fescue plant.

Researchers developed varieties of tall fescue that did not have the endophyte fungus, but these endophyte free varieties lacked persistence. Additional research has discovered so called novel or friendly endophytes. These novel endophytes do not produce animal toxins, but provide plant protection benefits, and thus have the potential to be more persistent than their endophyte free counterparts. New tall fescue varieties have been developed that contain these friendly endophytes.



In order to establish novel endophyte tall fescue, in many cases toxic KY-31 tall fescue must be killed before the new fescue variety can be seeded. Information about this renovation process has been condensed into a one-day school.

During 2017, renovation schools are being held in Kansas, Missouri, and Kentucky and are being sponsored by the Alliance for Grassland Renewal with additional support from the University of Missouri, Kansas State University and the University of Kentucky.

The schedule for these schools and registration contact information is as follows:

Monday, March 6, 2017. Mound Valley Community Center, Mound Valley, KS; Karen Walters, 620-820-6127.

Tuesday, March 7, 2017. Southwest Center, 14548 Highway H, Mount Vernon, MO; Eldon Cole, 417-466-3102.

Thursday, March 9, 2017. UK Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Lexington, KY; register a *KYFescue.eventbrite.com*.

Additional registration information and forms are available on the Alliance for Grassland Renewal website <http://grasslandrenewal.org/education.htm>. All of the schools start at 9 a.m. and end at 5 p.m. The registration fee includes a notebook of presentations, lunch, and breaks.

“The Alliance for Grassland Renewal formed in 2012. Participants include partners from the university, government, industry (including producers, seed companies, testing labs) and nonprofit groups. The current board members are from Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Missouri. The goal of the Alliance is to work together in replacing toxic tall fescue grass with a tall fescue that hosts a nontoxic endophyte, sometimes called a "novel" endophyte. This goal is pursued through four objectives: education, seed quality control, incentives, and promotion.” *Information taken from the Alliance for Grassland Renewal webpage which more fully explains the purpose of the organization.*

These renovation schools have been developed by the Alliance in order to help forage producers understand why fescue renovation is important, and the steps to take to help ensure a successful transition from toxic to non-toxic tall fescue pastures and hay fields.

Source: Gene Schmitz, Livestock Specialist

Winter Is the Perfect Time to Begin Estate Planning

The daylight hours are short and you have probably seen your family members at one time or another during the holiday season. What better time is there to begin the process of estate planning? You have spent your entire life building your farm and acquiring your personal assets. Now is the time to put effort into ensuring the future of your farm and your retirement are the way you envision it to be.

What will happen to my farm when I am gone? Will my spouse be taken care of? What about the house? What about taxes? These are all questions that need to be addressed. A recent study from Iowa State University revealed 50% of farmers do not have a current estate plan in place and 71% of retiring farmers have not yet named a successor. According to the U.S.

Census, the average age of a farmer is 58 years old. The average life expectancy for a male in the U.S. is 76 years and a female at 81 years. Time is a precious commodity you may or may not have.

What is estate planning? One text book definition of estate planning is the process of accumulation, management, conservation, and transfer of wealth considering legal, tax, and personal objectives. The goal is to have both an effective and efficient transfer of assets. An effective transfer means your assets are transferred to the person or institution to whom you intend for it to be transferred. An efficient transfer means the costs associated with the transfer are minimized, consistent with the greatest assurance of effectiveness. In short, you want your assets to go to whom you intend them to go, with as little expense as possible.

As a producer, what is the first step you can take to begin the process? A family meeting is a good start. Communication is one of the most important aspects of estate planning. By effectively communicating with heirs or others involved with the operation, it ensures everyone has the same understanding, provides a goal of what you want the plan to accomplish, and eliminates assumptions and secrecy. Here are a few tips to hold an effective family meeting:

- Establish a specific time and place for the meeting to occur
- Establish and stick to a time limit



- Give everyone involved an equal opportunity to contribute without criticism
- Don't allow it to turn into a gripe session
- Use good communication skills
- Make it fun

The goals of your estate plan should include:

- Maintain income and financial security
- Transfer assets to heirs as you wish
- Minimize income and estate taxes
- Minimize probate cost

Estate planning is not a solo venture. It will include several people to ensure it is done correctly, including your spouse, heirs, siblings, accountant, financial planner, banker, and an attorney who specializes in estate planning. If you are ready to begin the process, contact your Extension ag business specialist for assistance.

Source: Doug Scotten, Ag Business Specialist

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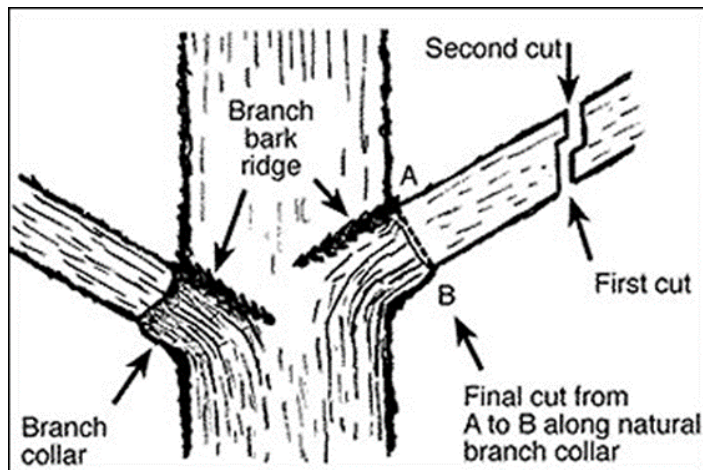
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Trees Care : Winter Pruning

Proactive tree pruning management is necessary for health, beauty and longevity of your tree. Late winter through early spring is considered the best time of year for pruning trees. Outside of unseasonable warming trends, trees go dormant during the winter months and generally do not start sap flow until early spring.

The reasons to take advantage of pruning deciduous trees during this time of year include:

- Lack of leaves allow the pruner to see the whole architecture of the tree and to select the most beneficial cuts
- Winter pruning minimizes wound exposure to insect and disease
- Winter pruning minimizes the time to begin “healing” in spring.
- Pruning allows for outdoor activities during the cabin fever days of winter



The best long term tree management decision occurs at planting. Choosing the right tree and planting it in the right place allows the tree to grow to its natural size and form where it may need little or no pruning after it becomes established. Yearly pruning during the first few years after planting will often help the tree to become established and to develop a structure that is both strong and aesthetically pleasing for the life of the tree.

For established trees, the best way to plan your pruning attack is to study the natural architecture of your tree from a distance of 50 to 100 feet. First pruning cuts should be directed towards obvious unwanted materials such as dead or dying branches, any cross branches or ones growing towards the tree center and any sprouts or suckers growing at the base of the trunk. After removing the unwanted materials, step back away from the tree for the second round of observations prior to more critical pruning cuts.

Remove branches or cut them back if they have the potential to be hazards in the future. For instance, large limbs growing towards roofs or power lines and lower branches that interfere with traffic or sidewalks. If your tree has more than one central leader (two or more branches competing for the top dominance), cut out all but the strongest so that the tree will regain its normal shape and development. In some cases, single side branches can develop more rapidly than surrounding branches and need to be cut back to slow growth and allow others to catch up. As a general rule, it is never a good practice to prune more than 20% of growth in any given year.

Pruning can involve use of potentially dangerous tools: (pruning loppers, chainsaws, pole saws and ladders) so always remember safety first before starting any project. When cutting large branches, it is best to use the three cut

method (See Figure). Starting approximately 12 inches from the trunk, make the first cut $\frac{1}{4}$ through on the underside of the branch to be removed. At the same location but on the upper side, the second cut can then be accomplished to remove the weight of the branch. The previous undercut will eliminate bark peeling back to the trunk. The last cut is then made at the branch collar perpendicular to the branch growth. This last cut minimizes the diameter of the cut and allows the most efficient wound for healing. When using loppers on smaller branches, the

collar may not be as evident but similar cut principles should be applied to minimize damaging cuts.

It has often been stated that it is easier to practice pruning techniques on a neighbor's tree, but if these pruning strategies are implemented, it will be easier to start closer to home. With any pruning strategies, remember to be safe first as limbs are not easily reattached (plant or human).

More information on Pruning and Care of Shade Trees (MU Guide 6866), First Aid for Storm damaged trees (MU Guide 6867), Basic Chainsaw Safety and Use (MU Guide 1959) are available at your local University of Missouri Extension office or online: extension.missouri.edu

Source: *Todd Lorenz, Agronomy Specialist*

Right of Entry in Your Farm Lease

Farm leases, they are nothing new. They are great way for agricultural producers to do what they love without the cost of actually owning the land. Of course, every farmer would love to own more land, but that cost has risen so significantly over the last few years that it can be cost prohibitive for them to do so. So most farmers will try to set up equitable leases for both themselves and the land owner. It is thought that more than 50% of farm leases in Missouri are to be verbal agreements. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, good practice would like to see leases in the written form. This allows both parties to have a clear understanding of what expectations are for each as well as what is included/excluded in the leasing agreement. There are five essential parts to a successful written lease:

1. Names of all parties involved
2. Length of time the lease will be in effect
3. Description of the property that is included/excluded from the lease
4. Rental rate
5. Signatures of all parties

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Right of Entry in Your Farm Lease (cont..)

These five items are very important when developing a successful lease. These items will help detour some issues if they were to arise. But, there is another major part of the lease that should be included, one that this writer feels to be just as important as the other five. The sixth most important part to have in a successful lease is a “Right of Entry” clause.

The “Right of Entry” clause allows the landowner to enter the property. If this clause were to be excluded from the leasing agreement, then the tenant legally would have the right to treat any entrant to the property as a trespasser, including the landowner. Now, this clause can be limited to certain times of the year, such as when the landowner would want to see tillage operations, planting, or harvesting. It may even be necessary to state in the lease that the landowner has right of entry to make repairs (if that has been negotiated). This clause isn’t created to cause hard feelings, but it protects both parties in the circumstance that there is some confusion or something happens during the length of the lease and it creates good business practice.

Remember there are five essential elements to a successful lease. However, there is another essential clause that should be considered when developing your lease: “Right of Entry”. If there are any questions about developing your successful lease, contact your local MU Extension Office.

Source: Nathaniel Cahill, Agricultural Business Specialist

