Planning, patience lead to better forage and cattle

Patience pays off for cattle producers who wait for fescue to grow before turning cattle out for spring grazing. After a long winter of feeding hay, producers are anxious to turn cattle into the fescue pasture. It is better to wait until fescue grows to heights of 3 to 8 inches before letting cattle onto fescue pastures.

Proper forage height is critical for several reasons. One reason is to reduce the risk of fescue toxicosis. Recent research by MU Extension agronomist Sarah Kenyon found that ergot alkaloid levels are most toxic in the bottom 2 inches of fescue. Grazing too short puts cattle at risk. Another reason is that fescue tries to make seed in the early spring. As stems elongate and seed heads emerge, the toxic alkaloids concentrate in the seed.

Strong root systems are another reason to let fescue grow to at least 3 to 8 inches. Plants need good roots to take up water and nutrients. Grazing too soon reduces the opportunity for roots to grow well and can destroy the root structure. This results in thinner grass stands and infestation of weeds. Overgrazing also causes cows to eat more stems and fewer leaves. The stem is less nutritious than the leaf, so cattle may not consume enough nutrients.

Prevent forage tillers from making a seed head by grazing before seed heads form. This allows leaves from other tillers from the same plant to grow rapidly, improving production and increasing yield of digestible nutrients.

Stay ahead of grazing fescue by planning. Keep fescue at 3-8 inches in a rotational grazing system. This allows better control of grazing pressure and height than in a continuous grazing system. Once the system is in place, monitor the stocking rate of the herd to match it with forage productivity.

This is difficult to do by management alone during periods of rapid forage growth. As I talk with cattle grazers, usually early in the grazing season, they will have excess forage and deficient stocking rate. Too low a stocking rate generally leads to overmature, low-quality forage. There are three ways to deal with excess forage: Develop spring-calving replacement heifers, retain weaned calves longer to put on cheap gains, and harvest the forage for hay.
Replacement heifers can be an extra source of farm income or a way to turn cattle over and bring new genetics to the herd. Longer retention of weaned calves may lead to preconditioning and adding cheap gain, which could improve marketability and profit potential. If harvesting hay, feed it back on the pasture it came from to replenish some nutrients removed during haymaking. Also, pastures will need a longer rest after hay harvest to allow forage to return to an acceptable height. Cut hay to no more than a 3-inch stubble for better pasture regrowth, to maintain a viable root system and to reduce toxin load.

As the grazing season begins, planning is important so that you manage the fescue at the proper height to help ensure adequate animal performance and plant persistence.

Source Patrick Davis, Livestock Specialist, University of Missouri Extension.

**Hay Production - Capture the Value of Your Investment**

**Friday, April 6, 2018**

**8:30 am to 4:30 pm**

**MU Wurdack Farm, 164 Bales Rd, Cook Station, MO**

Provide fundamental knowledge to help you lower production costs and improve net returns per acre when producing hay. Topics will cover economics, soil health and fertility, livestock requirements, storage, feeding, correct cutting times and much more.

Offered by - Ted C. Cunningham, Livestock Specialist

To register contact the Dent County Extension office at (573)729-3196 or extension.missouri.edu/dent before April 2, 2018. Cost: $40.00 or $60/Farm Couple
As growers gear up to apply Engenia, Xtendimax, or Fexapan it is important that they have met the Missouri Department of Agriculture requirements issued in 24c Special Local Need labeling in order to minimize the potential for off-target movement of dicamba.

24c labeling is in addition to the full Section 3 federal label for these products. A certified applicator must possess and read both labels.

Engenia, Xtendimax, and Fexapan are the only registered products for dicamba-tolerant soybeans and dicamba-tolerant cotton. This information is taken from the Department of Agriculture’s website with the addition of training information from University of Missouri Extension.

1. Engenia, Xtendimax, and Fexapan are restricted use products and under the MO 24c labeling are for sale to and use ONLY by certified applicators. Non-certified applicators are prohibited from applying these products.

2. Mandatory synthetic auxin herbicide training for certified applicators prior to the purchase and/or use of these products. Training is set up as a self-paced, web-based training.

To register for web-based or in-person training or for more information, go to extension.missouri.edu/main/spotlight/dicamba.aspx.

Certified applicators must complete an online Dicamba Notice of Application form daily, prior to application. The application form can be found at Agriculture.Mo.Gov/dicamba/notice. These products cannot be applied before 7:30 a.m. or after 5:30 p.m. Cutoff dates are as follows:

Use of ENGENIA, XTENDIMAX and FEXAPAN in dicamba-tolerant soybeans and dicamba-tolerant cotton is prohibited after June 1, 2018, in the following southeast Missouri counties: Dunklin, Pemiscot, New Madrid, Stoddard, Scott, Mississippi, Butler, Ripley, Bollinger and Cape Girardeau and is prohibited after July 15, 2018, in all remaining Missouri counties.

More information on synthetic auxins from MU Weed Science: https://weedscience.missouri.edu/dicamba.cfm

MO Department of Agriculture links to the 24c labels: http://agriculture.mo.gov/plants/pesticides/dicamba-facts.php.
Growing the economy by investing in rural communities and increasing opportunities for families is key to our Nation’s future. In 2016 Missouri designated 46 StrikeForce counties where collaboration has allowed community partners and public entities to provide targeted assistance.

The StrikeForce Project does this in partnership with University of Missouri Extension, NRCS/USDA, and Lincoln University by providing training that will help educate Missouri’s farm community, private landowners, conservation organizations, cooperating agencies, and general citizenry. Goals include:

- Increase in consumption of local and regionally produced products;
- Increase in customers and sales of local and regionally produced products;
- Strengthen market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets; and
- Improve food safety of local and regionally produced products.

When possible the project will work to support mentorship between experienced and beginning growers. For more information go to

https://www.facebook.com/MOSTrikeForce/

Upcoming Workshop Schedule:

April 6, 2018  High Tunnel Tour/ Gainesville
April 20, 2018  Fruit Production/ Jackson
April 25, 2018  Blackberry School / Mt. Vernon
April 26, 2018  Blackberry School / Farmington
April 18, 2018  Horticulture Tours / Jackson
May 16, 2018  Horticulture Tour/ Scott City
May 4, 2018  Mushroom Workshop / Perryville
June 12, 2018  Horticulture Tour/ Arcadia
June 27, 2018  Blackberry School / Mt. Vernon
June 28 & 29  Tomato School / Jackson
July 18, 2018  Horticulture Tour/ Puxico
Fall, 2018  Farmer Development/ TBA
Fall, 2018  Beginning Farmer/Taney Co.
Fall, 2018  Retail Farm to Market/ TBA
Fall, 2018  Experienced Farmer/ TBA
Fall, 2018  FSMA (Food Safety) / Southeast
Fall, 2018  FSMA (Food Safety) / Southwest
STARTING AND MANAGING A BUSINESS

April 25, 2018, 6:00-9:00 pm
Cape Girardeau Extension Center
684 Jackson Trail, Jackson, MO 65775

Attendees will learn the basics on how to legally start a business in Missouri.

Register by calling 573-243-3581. Fee is $20.00 if registered before April 18, 2018.

Commodities and markets - http://extension.missouri.edu/scott/crop-budgets.aspx

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