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 livestock specialists.....

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DATES TO

REMEMBER:

- March 6—North Missouri Beef and Forage Outlook Meeting, Savannah
- March 6—Gentry County Cattlemen's Association Meeting, Albany
- March 12—Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Meeting, Trenton
- March 13—North Missouri Weather Outlook and Farm Transition Meeting, Savannah
- March 19—Cost Effective Forage Management for Beef Production, Maryville
- April 1—Cover Crop Field Day and Plot Tour, Corning
- April 2—Cover Crop Field Day and Plot Tour, Albany

## Northwest Missouri Cover Crop Work

There is tremendous interest in the use of cover crops. In response to producer's desire to know how they work and how to best use them, two different projects are being conducted in northwest Missouri by University of Missouri Extension, MU Agricultural Experiment Station and NRCS. Cover crop plots are located at both the Hundley-Whaley Center in Albany and the Graves-Chapple Farm near Corning. Both studies are examining improvements to soil health and fertility and also for nutritive value of the forage produced for beef cattle. The Corning location is also looking at their use specifically in soils that have experienced flooding. A variety of different cover crops (cereal rye, triticale, wheat, oats, tillage radishes, turnips, hairy vetch, Austrian peas, red clover, white clover, etc.) and mixtures of these are being evaluated.

The pictures on the right were taken at Hundley-Whaley in Albany the first week of February. Although it is hard to tell from the picture, the cereal rye has a significant amount of growth and would provide some excellent forage for beef cows. Although the turnip tops have died back, the turnips themselves are quite large (and yes cows will eat them). As we continue to face dry weather conditions and decreasing pasture availability, cover crops may help producers fill gaps in their overall pasture/forage program. In a related demonstration, tall fescue plots were overseeded with either wheat, cereal rye, triticale or oats on February 6 to see if they would provide additional spring grazing in drought stressed pastures. Plans are in place to look at summer annual forages as well.

We are hosting field days at each of the different locations on April 1 and 2 in Corning and Albany respectively. The events will run from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. each day and will feature hands on discussion of the various plots. There is no charge to attend either event and for more information contact the Holt County MU Extension office at (660)-446-3724 or Gentry County MU Extension at (660)-726-5610.



Cereal Rye



Hairy Vetch



Turnips



Tillage Radishes



Oats

**Pasture Improvement Strategies**

Wayne Flanary, MU Extension Regional Agronomist, has offered some pasture improvement ideas. Wayne stresses that early planning can provide benefits, however, delayed decisions will limit options. The following are some options for those facing forage shortages.

**Winter**

Overseed red clover (ideally by February 15).

**Winter—April 30**

Add spring oats.

**Mid March—Mid April**

Plant winter wheat or triticale. Spring cover crops can be applied to row crop fields.

**May—June**

Plant sorghum-sudan hybrids, sudangrass, pearl millet, or corn.

**Late July—August**

Plant oats and turnips. Plant oats, winter wheat or triticale.

**Keep Track of Body Condition Score at Calving**

Records are important during calving. What do you keep track of in your herd? If body condition score of your cows isn't on the list, maybe it should be. Research has shown that body condition scores, which estimate the level of fat reserves in cows, have significant impacts on reproductive performance, milk production, and calf vigor. There are several times during the production cycle where assessment of condition of cows is important, and calving is one of them. At calving, it gives us an idea of how good our pre-calving nutrition program was. Ideally, mature cows will have a condition score of five and first-calf heifers will have a score of six by the time they calve. Unfortunately, it's not economical to try to put condition on cows when they're lactating. We'll talk more about that later in this article.

The next time to assess condition is at breeding. Thin cows could mean there's a mismatch of nutrient supply and demand.

Then, at weaning time, pay attention to your young cows. They are the most likely to be thin at weaning and either need better or more feed, or reduced requirements through early weaning of their calves. Come back 45 days after weaning to see how cows are regaining condition after the pressure of lactation has been removed.

Finally, if you noticed cows on the thin side this calving season, plan on checking condition scores around 90 days before calving. Late gestation is a critical time nutritionally. It's your last chance to get condition on your cows economically.

We have publications available that include example pictures of what the condition scores look like. For those of you with smart phones, several apps have been developed by university extension and industry to help you assess and monitor condition scores. Contact us if you're interested in any of those materials.

**??Question of the Week??**

**Are plans available for building a calf warming box?**

Yes they are. Calf warming boxes can be a lifesaver (literally) especially during a cold and wet calving season like we are currently experiencing. Most of the extension offices in the northwest region have a copy of the Midwest Plan Service (MWPS) book for beef cattle and plans are included in it. You can also call 800-562-3618 and request a copy of the MWPS catalog. It is free and contains more than 175 low-cost and free agricultural plans, some of which are downloadable. Here is a website that might be helpful to find more information: [www.mwps.org](http://www.mwps.org)

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