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January 20, 2022

MEETINGS AND MORE MEETINGS

The 93rd Annual Soils and Crops Conference will be 6 pm January 27 at the First Christian Church, 905 Old Exeter Road, Cassville. Three topics will be on the agenda. Beef Outlook, Scott Brown, always a popular prognosticator on prices, leads the lineup after supper. Tim Schnakenberg will discuss coping with high fertilizer prices. The evening wraps up with a panel discussing direct marketing your herd. Panelists are Circle M, Exeter, David Middleton, Mt. Vernon and Roshan Weerasinghe, Powell. To register, call 417-847-3161.

The 91st Livestock & Forage Conference is set for February 10, 6 pm at the Crane First Baptist Church, 0.2 miles south of Crane on Missouri 413. You'll hear from Dr. Jordan Thomas U of MO Extension beef specialist on how to improve reproduction in your beef cow herd. I'll review how you might learn from sending your bull through a bull clinic this year. Tim Schnakenberg will tell you how to make good hay in bad weather. Call 417-357-6812 to register.

On February 24th at 4 pm at the University of Missouri Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center near Mt. Vernon, 14538 State Road you can attend the KOMA (Four State) Beef Cattle Conference. Start time is 4 pm with a trade show. The speakers begin at 4:30 pm.

Lead-off speaker is Dr. Derrell Peel, Oklahoma State Extension economist and beef outlook specialist. After supper we'll switch to University of Missouri faculty for beef nutrition from Dr. Derek Brake and Dr. Eric Bailey. They will discuss finishing beef cattle and stocker cattle feeding and management. Contact the Cedar County Extension Center, 417-276-3313.

Due to the above quality offerings, we will not squeeze the Monett Beef and Dairy Conference in this year. Which reminds me, the Spring Forage Conference in Springfield will be February 22. Due to COVID several

of those events took a break in 2021 so we're overwhelming you in 2022. I trust you'll sort through those offered near you and make appropriate choices.

PASTURE RENTAL RATES

Recently, I've had several requests for current University of Missouri rental rates. The MU Guide Sheet on cash rental rates was updated in 2021. These rates were gathered on line and encompassed 192 rented fields.

Intensively managed pasture showed less than 2.5 acres per cow, an average of \$45.07 per acre per year with a low of \$30, the mid-range was \$40 and the top was \$70. Good pasture was described as needing less than 4 acres per pair and that average price was \$40.27. Fair pasture was \$33.98 per acre per year and required 4 to 7 acres per year. The range went from \$12 all the way to \$70 per pair.

These numbers some times don't tell the whole story. When a person contacts me I reply that a lot of pricing depends on the pasture's location and various "bells and whistles" it might have. Is it hot fescue that has a history of poor animal performance? What's the water supply like? Is it handy to the person wishing to lease it? Is there a corral on it? Can you rent it for multiple years with prospects of making a really good pasture? Is the land lord someone you can work with? Remember, current land prices are escalating and you can likely rent it cheaper than you can own it.

WASTE NOT WANT NOT

We're in the middle of hay feeding season. Our 2021 budget indicates for a fall-calving, southern Missouri beef cow will have a \$217.78 average cost against her and her calf. Visualize how much of that is stored forage.

Recently, Dr. Dave Lalman, Oklahoma State Beef Cattle Specialist wrote an article pointing out that "hay waste" could be easily in the 20% or greater range. It's become popular to point out waste can be viewed as soil nutrients

and organic matter if managed well and spread over the pasture or hay field. Dave's article pointed out that a very popular hay ring feeder did not have a solid sheeted bottom. If you spend more money for that extra metal, you'll cut waste in half.

If you add a cone or basket in the middle of the ring, waste is further lowered to 3 ½ to 8%. Dave drove home the point with two pictures taken 24 hours apart of a basic 1300 lb. grass bale setting on a concrete pad without a bale ring, then 24 hours later a picture showed the same bale after 12 cows had access to it. Needless to say, the cows had pulled a lot of hay out to lay on. You might try that same demo at your place before you buy your next hay ring.

50 PLUS YEARS WITH FESCUE

I moved to Mt. Vernon on June 1, 1968. I had spent four years in Saline county, Marshall, MO after hiring on with Extension. Prior to that I trained about three months in Higginsville, West Plains and Clinton.

During my training I was slightly exposed to some fescue in Howell and Henry counties, but my eyes were really opened to fescue when I landed in Lawrence and Greene counties in 1968. The second Beef Newsletter I wrote in July, 1968 referred to clipping fescue pastures in late August then topdress to get fall and winter pasture. My November, 1968 Beef Newsletter addressed fescue foot. My closing statement was "The good results from it's use overshadow the occasional losses suffered from fescue foot in nearly all cases."

In 1969 the University of Missouri Extension, in cooperation with a large number of farmers, bankers and veterinarians put out a publication, "Ozark Beef Cow-Calf Program" that outlined the way of the future for the 44 – county area in south Missouri. Fescue was targeted as needing more palatable varieties that would boost gains through research at Columbia and the research farm at the Southwest Center, Mt. Vernon. Rotational grazing and clipping often can increase fescue palatability. Growing legumes with the fescue was viewed as being very important. Lespedeza seemed to be the legume of choice for interseeding into fescue stands.

In 1970, I began pushing for cutting fescue earlier in May in fact in the boot to early bloom stage. Big round bales were not an item around yet so we promoted the little, Allis-Chalmers balers to be used. A lot of those little

bales were left in the field and grazed in the summer as the fescue plants were sort of dormant.

In the late 70's, Dr. George Garner, University of Missouri biochemist became very interested in fescue-related poor animal performance beyond fescue foot. By that time, many extension and cattle producers were concerned about rough-haired, heat-stressed, poor performance from a gain and reproduction standpoint in cattle grazing Kentucky 31 fescue. High levels of nitrogen, over 100 lbs. per acre were suspected as part of the problem and some simply felt it was nitrate related. Dr. Garner took sabbatical leave at the University of Georgia in the early 80's to learn more about a fungus they had also linked to poor cattle performance on fescue. Shortly after returning from Georgia, Dr. Garner came to the Southwest Research Center and I took him to Wilburn Garoutte's farm west of State Road H on Lawrence 2150. He collected several fescue stem and tillers, took them back to the Center and found the endophyte fungus after staining the split stems and viewing them under a microscope.

Of course, that was the early stages of the discovery of the endophyte fungus. The researchers said they could develop fescue without the fungus. They did that but those plants were unable to survive drought, disease and insect problems and died in 2 or 3 years.

The next move was to replace the bad, toxic-producing fungus and replace it with a novel fungus (friendly) that gave the plants tolerance to a variety of stressors and animals performance greatly improved.

Extension, researchers and seed companies in the 1990's finally bred a fescue variety, in fact a number of varieties, that could safely be fed to your livestock without negatively affecting animal performance for gain, reproduction, blood flow, health, etc.

Now, if more of you would destroy some of your worst affected fields of "hot fescue" so your successors to those fields can reap the benefits from 50-years plus of work. Many of those fields have lost a lot of plants anyway. So, in the next year or so, bite the bullet and join others in the 21st Century. You'll be surprised at how good the novels produce and like me you wonder, why did it take so long to get from the toxic, soil bank fescue problems of the 50's to today???