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OFGC -Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council

Note from OFGC Executive Secretary

Dear Forage Enthusiast,

We have noticed that you have in the past few years been a member of the Ohio Forage and Grassland Council. Enclosed with this newsletter is a brochure promoting our upcoming OFGC Annual Meeting on Feb. 8, 2019. We are hoping you not only will register for our Annual Meeting but to also consider re joining the organization. A membership brochure is also enclosed if you're unable to attend our meeting on Feb 8 but would still like to join. We are looking forward to seeing you!

Gary Wilson
OFGC Executive Secretary

Spring 2019

About OFGC:

We represent a collective voice for issues affecting forage animal agriculture.

We develop present and future leaders in the forage industry.

We encourage research, education, and service efforts to improve forage production, utilization, and marketing.

OFGC strives to provide a forum or means for the exchange of ideas, problems/opportunities, and solutions in forage animal agriculture.

OFGC Mission:

The Ohio Forage and Grassland Council exists to enhance the profitability of Ohio farmers through the use of forage and grassland resources, and to facilitate the opportunity for collective interaction between producers and other forage workers, both public and private.

2018 Forage Performance Trials Available

Author(s): Mark Sulc and John McCormick

The 2018 Ohio Forage Performance Report is available online at <https://u.osu.edu/perf/>. The report summarizes forage yield data collected from forage variety trials in Ohio during 2018, including commercial varieties of alfalfa planted in September 2017 (1 trial) and September 2017 (1 trial). The trials summarize forage yield performance of 34 alfalfa varieties in the spring 2018 of Ohio during 2018, including commercial ryegrass varieties. annual ryegrass, The cover crop trial summarizes annual ryegrass planted and ground cover development in the fall (1 trial) and cover after a mid-September seeding in 2017 and winter injury, ground cover and spring biomass production in the spring 2018 of 22 cover crop varieties including rape, turnip, ryegrass, annual ryegrass, Balansa clover, hairy vetch, and hairy vetch.

**Register now for OFGC Annual Meeting
February 8, 2019
Ohio Department of Agriculture--Reynoldsburg, OH**

Time to plant...really!

written by Chris Penrose, AFGC Vice president, OFGC Member

With weather like we are having, you may think this is a crazy statement, but it will soon be time to sow seed in our pasture and hay fields. There is a method called “frost seeding” where you apply seed to the ground and the freezing and thawing of the soil in February and early March will provide seed to soil contact allowing germination of the seed. There is a little more risk of the seed not germinating than a traditional seeding, but the cost and time is a lot less.

The secret is to have exposed soil. Pasture and hay fields that have thin stands and exposed soil are good candidates for frost seeding. The seed that works best is clover. Medium red clover is the cheapest seed and works well. Other clovers will also work. Simply apply 3-10#/acre of seed and let Mother Nature take her course. Some steps to improve germination include mixing fertilizer with the seed as the fertilizer will scratch the seed coat and improve germination. If the ground can withstand the heavy equipment, seed can be mixed into fertilizer at a bulk fertilizer plant. Keep in mind that when you apply this mixture with a “spinning seeder”, fertilizer will travel twice as far as the seed, so you will want to cut the rate in half and overlap by half when applying the fertilizer and seed. Some have had success letting livestock tramp in the seed with their hooves. A light grazing of fields when grass starts growing will keep down grass competition as the clover starts. Don't worry about hooves tramping and killing

the new seedlings as the increased sunlight, providing added growth of the remaining plants will more than offset the loss.

Why seed clovers? A heavy round seed has a better chance of making soil contact than a light flatter seed. Dr. Garry Lacefield, Extension Forage Specialist from University of Kentucky says that clovers, seeding in the right conditions will germinate most years. Grasses are more “hit or miss” germinating about half of the time. With alfalfa, the odds are even less. Frost seeding alfalfa into an alfalfa stand rarely works as existing alfalfa is toxic to new plants. If an alfalfa field is starting to thin out, an option to extend the life of the stand would be to frost seed red clover.

Another reason to plant clover, especially red clover is the high seedling vigor. It is tolerant of a wide range of soil pH and fertility conditions and is more drought tolerant than white clover. The advantage of frost seeding a legume like red clover is that legumes “fix” nitrogen typically in excess of their own needs, providing added fertility to other plants, improving an improved stand. Once legumes become established in a stand of grass and compose 25-30 % of the stand, there is no need to provide additional nitrogen, reducing fertility costs.

Other legumes that can be frost seeded are birdsfoot trefoil and annual lespedza. Birdsfoot trefoil is a persistent perennial once

established, but is slow to do so. Some have had success mixing it with red clover. Annual lespedza, especially in the southern third of Ohio, is an option. It is non-bloating, drought tolerant, and will tolerate poor soils. Expect growth in July and August and do not graze after early September to allow the plants to produce seed for future crops.

A final note on legumes. When seeding a legume that has not been grown in a field for years, it is important to include the proper inoculum with the seed to insure that the bacteria responsible for fixing the nitrogen will be present.

If you choose to frost seed grass, which will do best? Studies by Dan Undersander, Forage Specialist from University of Wisconsin indicate that perennial ryegrass will do best (note that it grows best in Ohio north of I-70), followed by orchardgrass, then timothy. Other studies note that annual ryegrass will work good compared to other grasses.

Finally, no matter what choose to plant, use improved varieties. Numerous studies confirm that those varieties will last several years longer in most conditions. Forage trials at OSU show there a several red clover varieties that have high yields and stand percentages 60% or greater after four years. These are more expensive varieties than some of the common, shorter-lived varieties, but may be worth it to some.

Pasture Management for Winter Feeding Areas

Submitted by: Bob Hendershot Retired State Grassland Conservationist USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service – Ohio

Over the past summer I spoken at numerous grazing events, more and more producers have asked about winter pasture management. Regardless of the system, grazing stockpiled grass, feeding hay on a heavy use pad, unrolling hay bales out on the pasture or using the pre set spaced-bale system we need to consider both the soil and forage plants. During the winter when the ground is frozen, cattle may stay on the same area for a month or more; but when the spring thaw comes or if we have a wet open winter like this one has been so far; cattle should be moved every few days to give ample rest to the soil and plants. One consideration is that the longer livestock are in the same pasture, the greater the damage to the soils and plants in that pasture. I recommend to producers to develop several winter feeding areas over just one large area because it allows the farmer the option to rotate the animals throughout in the winter months. If we get severe trampling in areas, a light disking or harrowing may be required to prepare a seedbed to reestablish forages in those areas. Italian ryegrass works wonderfully in establishing good quick ground cover that will have excellent forage quality for the entire grazing season. A 20 to 40 pound seeding rate depending on how much bare soil is exposed. It can be broadcast and let the cows walk the seed in just before green up.

Some of you may not have read much about the pre set spaced bale feeding system. This system uses the large round bales but they are placed in the field or pasture where they will be fed in the fall prior to winter feeding. This reduces feeding time in the winter, running tractors over wet soils and starting tractors in the very cold. It can be used in conjunction with stockpiling, but not necessary. The bales are spaced on 20 foot centers in rows. The number of bales in a row should equal the number bales needed to feed the herd. Bale rings are used to reduce the wastage. When designing the system plan for one bale ring for every 12 to 15 cows, and a 1000 pound bale to last about 2 to 3 days. A temporary fence of polytape or polywire is used to protect the rest of the bales while feeding those offered. Set the fence up ahead then rolling the rings over the next row of bales. Sisal twine bales work the best, net wrapped and plastic twine needs to be removed. If you have high quality hay that has been stored inside you may need to wait longer before set the bales. Most hay loss occurs in the summer and early fall when stored outside. The high quality hay including big square bales can be set out in spaced system during the winter when the soil is fit. Even setting a month's worth of hay is more efficient than feeding daily. Grazing systems generally fit in with the concept of environmentally friendly farming. What could be more natural than cows and calves, sheep and lambs, goats or horses grazing on green grass in the spring and summer? As we have worked on extending our grazing season we often find those same animals grazing on green forages well into the fall and winter. Consider feeding your round bales out on your existing pastures whenever you can. This will allow the livestock to spread manure on the areas that usually need it most and will reduce the amount that you must store and handle. The wasted hay will also go directly back to the soil. This is an excellent technique to build up the soil in areas that are not as fertile as we would like them to be. Select these areas to also minimize the runoff leaving the field. We want to keep our nutrients on the farm where they will benefit us, not allow them to enter the stream where they will be considered pollution to the neighbor. Well drained areas are good spots to consider for winter feeding areas that are buffered from water bodies. Be prepared to go to a heavy use area, preferably with a solid foundation during periods of particularly wet weather. I have been using this system this year with my stockpiled tall fescue giving the cows some new grass every day to graze and moving the bale ring to a new bale every three days.

While manure may not be as much of a concern with grazing systems, since we don't have a lot of manure to spread, we should still need to be concerned with many of the same issues. Is there a potential for the manure to move off site from frozen or snow covered areas that we are grazing or spreading manure on? Are we observing

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an adequate buffer area between areas of concentrated feeding or manure spreading and potentially sensitive areas such as streams, wells, ponds, and the neighbor's property? Is there adequate ground cover to keep the manure where it lands or will it be carried off site due to water flow or erosion?

If you are feeding on a heavy use pad during part or all of the winter, then you need to be aware of where the water and manure that accumulates on or around this pad is going. Hopefully you are able to keep it on site and spread it in the spring when weather conditions are favorable. If you must clean the pad and spread the manure during the winter, remember that your neighbors may not think that "brown snow" is a natural thing and that brown water going down the ditch may invite a few unwelcome phone calls or visits.
