



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
College of Agricultural and
Environmental Sciences



FORAGE FACTS

In this issue:

- Web update
- Forage fed beef issues
- Bermudagrass hay testing program
- Georgia Grazing School planned

Volume 2 Number 2 Summer 2003

John Andrae, Extension Forage Specialist

Forage website continues to develop

The Georgia forages commodity website is continually updated with publications and other information. Several articles have been added to the site since the Spring Forage Facts newsletter. These publications can be viewed at www.georgiaforages.com. Articles include information on selecting hybrid bermudagrass varieties, establishing clovers, controlling weeds, and curing hay. A printable table listing labs available for tall fescue endophyte testing will also be added within a week. If you are in a tall fescue producing area, please print this table and file it for future reference as several inquiries have been received regarding endophyte testing.

Forage fed beef issues

We continue to receive forage fed beef production questions. An extension publication is being developed to address questions in this area. In the

meantime, multiple issues should be considered if a forage fed beef operation is planned. It is best to think about forage fed beef production “in reverse”. Begin to plan operations with regard to consumer issues (supply of product, demand for certain cuts of meat etc.) and work backwards to the actual animal and forage production issues. Producers must be able to develop their own markets and serve consumers. Unless the producer is willing (and has the personality) to develop these markets and interact with customers, forage fed beef production is probably not a viable option. Second, meat processing facilities and packaging issues must be addressed. Determine how to package ground beef and lower value cuts into an easily marketable form. Anyone can market steaks, but consistently and profitably selling the remaining 93% of the animal is more difficult. Third, consider forage species needed to provide high animal gains. Particularly for the final few weeks of finishing.

Selecting a high quality forage is relatively easy during spring months when winter annuals are available; however, finishing cattle on bermudagrass or bahiagrass in the summer without grain supplementation and controlled grazing is difficult if not impossible. Forage fed beef can be a highly profitable enterprise, but is not for an average producer. Forage, cattle, and people management are critical!

Bermudagrass hay testing program

All of the hay testing labs across the Southeast use similar equations to predict bermudagrass hay quality. These equations are the best estimate of bermudagrass energy content that is available, but are out of date and in need of revision. The University of Georgia is currently developing equations that will predict the digestibility of bermudagrass and bahiagrass hay using near infrared spectroscopy. At a cost of \$10, these equations will allow accurate prediction of warm season grass digestibility and crude protein content within 24 hours of sample receipt. Reports will be given in a format that is easily understood and interpreted by producers. We are extremely excited about this technology and are asking that extension offices work closely with hay producers to assist in developing and refining the new equations. Eventually we hope to refine these equations to the point that available crude protein (i.e. exclude heat bound protein) and possibly mold and other contaminants. We have received several samples so far, but additional samples would be helpful to further refine and validate these equations. Please assist us in getting these equations to an accurate and useful state. A submission form is available online at:

<http://aesl.ces.uga.edu/forms/nirdigest/NIRDigestibility.pdf>

or contact Dr. Paul Vendrell (706) 542-7690 or Dr. John Andrae (706) 542-1529 for a copy to be mailed to you. Georgia will be the first location in the country (if not the world) to develop and utilize these important NIRS digestibility equations for warm season perennial grasses. Thanks in advance for your help.

Georgia Grazing School planned

We are currently planning a two day grazing school that will follow a similar format as Alabama, Kentucky and Missouri grazing schools. This school will be a joint effort between The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service and NRCS and is tentatively planned for October 20-21 in the Athens area. As in other states, a fee will be charged to offset costs of this school. We'll keep you posted on registration and other information as it develops. The school will be limited to 35-40 participants and will cover many aspects of plant and grazing management in detail. Both hands-on and classroom training will be included. A copy of Southern Forages, a grazing school notebook, and meals will be provided. If you are interested, please block these dates out on your calendar and wait for the registration form.



“We will weigh the plots and analyze the data as usual. We do not make guesses as to which yielded best.”