



# Forage News

## Keeping Forage-Livestock Producers in Kentucky Informed

Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, editors

March 2024

### Upcoming Forage Events

Mark your calendars for upcoming Forage Events. The 2024 Spring Fencing Schools will be held April 23 in Morehead, KY and April 25 in Mayfield, KY. This school provides hands-on instruction focusing on the installation of fixed knot woven wire fence and electrified smooth high tensile fence.

The 2024 Beginning Grazing School will be held April 30-May 1 in Princeton, KY at the research station and a local venue. If you are asking yourself “where do I start” then this school is for you. It is designed to provide you with the tools needed to establish a profitable and sustainable grazing system.

The 2024 Electric Fence Troubleshooting School will be held June 12 in Butler County. This school is designed to provide students with tips on installation of new and troubleshooting of existing electric fencing.

If you or someone you recommend want to sign up for these events make sure to go to the UK Forage Website under Events. Numbers are limited for all 3 of these programs. Sign up today.

### Don't forget the fertilization basics

At the Alfalfa and Stored Forages Conference held in Bowling Green, KY., earlier this month, Edwin Ritchey discussed the core principles of nutrient management in forage systems. The extension soil specialist with the University of Kentucky began his presentation by stressing the importance of taking a representative soil sample that includes at least 20 soil cores collected at the proper depth.

“The first step in a successful soil fertility program is soil testing, and the first step of successful soil testing is soil sampling,” Ritchey asserted. Avoid pulling soil samples in pastures near feeders and waterers, as well as other areas where animals congregate and manure accumulates. And in terms of soil testing frequency, Ritchey suggested the higher the forage removal rate, the more intensive soil sampling must be.

For example, a hayfield that is cut multiple times a year should undergo more frequent soil testing, and thus more frequent fertilization, than a pasture where livestock graze and add nutrients back to the system. No matter how often soil is sampled, though, Ritchey emphasized doing so at roughly the same point in the growing season every time. “If you compare a fall sample to a spring sample, there are going to be differences,” he said.

Once you have the report returned then make sure to consider the recommendations. It is generally accepted that the higher the soil test nutrient value, the less yield

### Forage Timely Tips: March

- ✓ Continue pasture renovation by no-tilling seeding legumes.
- ✓ Place small seed at 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep and check depth several times during planting; slow down for more precise seeding.
- ✓ Continue feeding hay until adequate forage exists in the pasture for grazing.
- ✓ Spring seeding of grasses should be done in early to mid-March (but fall is preferred).
- ✓ Begin smoothing and re-seeding hay feeding and heavy traffic areas.
- ✓ Graze pastures overseeded with clover to reduce competition from existing grasses. Pull livestock off before grazing new clover plants.
- ✓ Provide free choice high-magnesium mineral to prevent grass tetany on lush spring growth.



response with each additional unit of fertilizer there will be. In other words, maximizing forage yield with greater rates can become less cost-effective, also known as the law of diminishing returns. Overall, he recommended adjusting soil pH in pastures and hayfields before applying fertilizer to ensure the added nutrients are as effective as possible. ~ Excerpt of article by Amber Friedrichsen for Hay and Forage Grower, Feb. 20, 2024. Read the entire article and sign up to subscribe to the online and/or physical copy of the magazine at [hayandforage.com](http://hayandforage.com).

### Time to Begin Control Efforts for Buttercup

Buttercups mostly grow as winter annuals, although some species are classified as short-lived perennials. In

Kentucky there are different species of buttercups that are known to impact pasture fields, such as hispid buttercup (*Ranunculus hispidus*), tall buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), and small flower buttercup (*Ranunculus abortivus*). These plants typically produce five, shiny yellow petals beginning in the early spring. Although different species may have somewhat similar flower heads, each of these buttercup species differs somewhat in their vegetative leaf characteristics. During the time petals are showy new seed has already begun to develop. Waiting until after flowers appear can be too late to implement control tactics. This is one reason buttercups survive year to year and new plants emerge each year. The photo above shows hispid buttercup with mature flowers and new seed forming.

Some buttercup plants may emerge in the fall but most plants emerge from seed during the late winter months when temperatures begin to warm. Buttercup, as a cool season weed, often flourishes in over grazed pasture fields with poor stands of desirable forages. Therefore, pasture management practices that improve and promote growth of desirable plants during these months is one of the best methods to help compete against the emergence and growth of this plant. Whereas, livestock animals allowed to overgraze fields during the fall and winter months is one of the main factors that contribute to buttercup problems. Mowing fields or clipping plants close to the ground in the early spring before buttercup plants can produce flowers may help reduce the amount of new seed produced, but mowing alone will not totally eliminate seed production. The photo above shows hispid buttercup with mature flowers and new seed forming.



effectively control buttercup. Depending on other weeds present herbicide products that contain dicamba+2,4-D (eg. Weedmaster, Brash, Rifle-D, etc.), aminopyralid (eg. GrazonNext, Duracor), or triclopyr (eg. Crossbow) can also be used. However, legumes such as clovers interseeded with grass pastures will be severely injured or killed by these other herbicide products. For optimum results apply a herbicide in the early spring (March or early April) before flowers are observed, when buttercup plants are still small and actively growing in a vegetative growth stage. For best herbicide activity wait until daytime air temperatures is greater than 60 F for two to three consecutive days. Consult the herbicide label for further information on grazing restrictions, precautions, or other possible limitations.

For fields heavily infested with buttercup a variety of control tactics may be needed. Apply a herbicide to help reduce the population of buttercup plants in the spring plus use good pasture management techniques throughout the year to help improve and thicken the stand of desirable forages. The field photo at the bottom of the page shows a pasture field in late April with flowering buttercup. ~ Article by Dr. J.D. Green, UK Extension Weed Scientist

### Passing of a Forage Legend — Hank Bendorf

Recently Hank Bendorf passed away at 84. We know him for his support of KY forage agriculture. Jimmy Henning, Garry Lacefield and myself (Ray) know him as a mentor and friend. Hank was also instrumental in the early career of Ray and Jimmy. He was President the Alfalfa Council, the American Forage and Grassland Council, and the Forage and Grassland Foundation. He was director of the American Seed Trade Association and The Canadian Seed Trade Association, and one of the founders of the National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance. He received the merit certificate and medallion award from the American Forage and Grassland Council.

Hank was a family man first and foremost. Hank will be remembered as a kind, fair man who always had a story to share. He will also be remembered as a man who left a rich legacy in forage agriculture.

### Matt Isaacs — National Forage Spokesperson

Matt Isaacs' story of improvements on his farm earned him the title of 2024 National Forage Spokesperson. It is the second consecutive year a Kentucky producer has won this American Forage and Grassland Council contest.

Isaacs and his wife Madison purchased 70 acres recently that was previously in no-till tobacco and row crop production to add to the 55 acres they already owned. His plan was to design a grazing system that would increase his capacity and efficiency for his forage and beef enterprises. "I wanted to do things better and make sure everything I did added value to my operations," said Isaacs who runs a cow-calf operation and custom hay operation and is partners in a much larger farming operation with his parents Tim and Ann Marie Isaacs.

Matt is quick to point out that changes in his operation took time to implement. He has also done a significant amount of research, including finding available resources, attending farm shows, reading lots





of literature and asking questions of fellow farmers and industry supporters. He has a great relationship with Adam Estes, his extension agent. The two have been lifelong friends and often bounce ideas off each other. "Matt is always willing to try new things," Estes said. "He does an excellent job with forages, fertilization and keeps his farm in great working condition. He comes from a family of hard workers."

Matt admits that forages were not always his top priority when he started in the business. He changed his focus to cattle production to forages after talking with local producer Clayton Gerald. "He told me that I have to realize that I am really just a dirt farmer. I use the dirt to grow the forages and the cattle consume the forages and then I see the gains and the cycle continues," Isaacs said. "That really stuck with me."

Soil testing is a critical part of making sure his ground and grasses have the nutrients they need. He soil tests at least once year and twice in some years. He's also willing to participate in research projects. A recent research project allowed him to see how sorghum could be used as silage in his feeding operation both alone and when mixed with corn silage. Isaacs encourages other young farmers to start out with the basics and find approaches that work for their operation and to make the most of cost-share opportunities. "Don't try to be like somebody else and use the resources that are available to you to improve your operation," he said. "Remember that not everything happens overnight."

His grazing system is always evolving. Not only does Isaacs change up his grazing rotation each year but he also evaluates the pastures and makes renovations when necessary. "Pastures are never where you want them to be," he said. "Components in forage mixes will die out while other parts will take over and you just have to evaluate and adjust."

~Excerpt of article by Amber Friedrichsen, Hay and Forage Grower Magazine. Feb. 27, 2024. Read the entire article and sign up to subscribe to the online and/or physical copy of the magazine at [hayandforage.com](http://hayandforage.com).

#### **Awards presented at the 43th KY Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference in Bowling Green, KY (photos left, top to bottom):**

##### **UK Thomas Poe Cooper Leader Award**

2024 Winner: Clayton Gerald, successful hay producer in Hart County, KY. Past President of KFGC and the National Hay Association. This is one of the top awards given by UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

##### **Schnitzler Producer Award**

2024 Winner: John Adams, successful hay producer and farm and community leader in Russell County, KY.

##### **Thompson Industry Award**

2024 Winner: Justin Henderson, Caudill Seeds and long-term KFGC supporter and KFGC board member.

##### **Lacefield Public Service Award**

2024 Winner: Kimberly Field, director of KDA Hay Testing Program. Long-term KFGC supporter.



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**Upcoming Events (see Forage website for details and to register, click on EVENTS)**

**March 5** - Horses and Horsemen: Pastures Please!! Georgetown

**March 12/13** - Illinois Grazing Lands Coalition Conference, Springfield, IL

**March 19** - Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop, Greenville, TN

**April 11** - Horse Farm Management Practices Field day, Harrodsburg

**April 23** - KY Fencing School, Morehead

**April 25** - KY Fencing School, Mayfield

**April 30-May 1**—KY Beginning Grazing School. Princeton, KY.

**June 12**—Electric Fence Troubleshooting School, Butler County.