



Athens County Livestock

July | 2015



Summer Grazing

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Keeping your head above water

The replacement heifers above are enjoying some summer grazing on the Bar O Ranch of Terry and Val Oakes. We have had some great weather this season for growing grass. The problem has been for those folks trying to put up hay. There never seems to be enough dry days to cut and bale hay. This is frustrating because we know the longer grass grows, the lower the quality. Just don't be tempted to put wet grass into bales. You will exchange one problem for another. It looks like these weather patterns will continue for the foreseeable future. We will have to come up with some creative ideas of how we are going to provide all the hay for our animals this winter. Keep reading these newsletters and look for articles in coming editions that address this problem.

Ed Brown

Feed Prices Rising Along with the Water

- John D. Anderson, Deputy Chief Economist, American Farm Bureau Federation
(originally published by the Livestock Marketing Information Center on 6/30/2015)

It is a truism in the commodity markets that “rain makes grain.” This month, that old adage is bumping up against another equally-valid axiom that “too much of a good thing is a bad thing.” Persistent rains across the Midwest have had the combined effect of degrading the condition of the corn crop and also preventing the planting of the last of soybean crop. Both of these factors are supportive of prices across the entire grain/oilseed complex.

The supply-side support that the wet June weather has added to the market has started to have a significant impact on prices. The new crop (Dec) corn contract has gained a little more than 10 percent in value since mid-June – rebounding from a life-of-contract low close of \$3.63 ½ to back over \$4.00 by last Friday. New crop (Nov) soybean futures have rebounded by a similar amount, in percentage terms, over that same period.

Precipitation over parts of the Corn Belt in the past month has been extreme by historic standards. Figure 1 below shows precipitation for the 30-day period ending on June 29, 2015 in terms of the percentage deviation from normal levels. Virtually all of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio have received rainfall levels in excess of 150 percent of normal. The same is true over key grain-producing areas in Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, and Nebraska as well.

The much-above-normal June rainfall has taken something of a toll on crop condition ratings. Nationally, Monday’s crop condition rating for corn had 68 percent of the crop rated as good-to-excellent. This is a decline from 74 percent three weeks ago and compares with a 75 percent good-to-excellent rating at the same point in the season last year. But last year was an exceptionally good year. The 5-year average good-to-excellent rating at this point in the season is 66 percent. A state-level look at Illinois shows a similar result. Illinois’ corn crop condition rating in Monday’s report was 62 percent good-to-excellent. This looks pretty bad compared to last year’s 80 percent good-to-excellent but is actually right in line with a five-year average good-to-excellent rating at this point in the season of 61 percent.

The point of all this is that the this year’s crop is still a long way from being a disaster – though there are certainly some real disasters out there for individual producers. The crop probably has suffered some loss in yield potential across key parts of the Midwest, but a national yield at trend still looks like a realistic possibility. That will change if things don’t start to improve right away though.

Farm Science Review

Dates for the Farm Science Review are September 22, 23, and 24.
Tickets are available at the extension office for \$7. Children 5 and under are admitted for free.

Stockpiling Forages

The hay may not be doing too well this year, but there is still a chance to make good use of your pastures this fall. Stockpiling forages is a great way to save up some grass for your livestock without having to put up hay. All you need is a field that you can close off from livestock for a couple of months. During the first week of August, put 50 units of nitrogen per acre on the field. Once your other fields have stopped producing in the fall, you can start strip grazing. This requires a single hot wire strung across the field. You will better utilize the pasture, if you keep the cattle confined to a small area. This will require you to move the hot wire every few days, but a good size field could last you well into December or even longer. Even with snow on the ground, cattle can dig through and find any grass that might be there. If you have any questions about the process, let me know and I will walk you through it.

I would also like to do this as a demonstration for other farmers. If you would like to volunteer a field, please contact me.

Anyone who grazes livestock is a grass farmer. The livestock are just a byproduct that shows how good a grass farmer you are.

Testing Hay

Testing hay quality is a key component in making informed management decisions for your livestock. In previous newsletters, I have mentioned this practice. This year it is especially important with delayed first cuttings and possible problems with second cuttings or no second cuttings at all. The first response of many producers is to put out protein tubs or maybe some extra grain and hope for the best. This management plan can really hit you where it hurts, the wallet. Many producers overdo it on the supplements and spend way more than they need to while others try and cut corners and feed anything that resembles hay. This leads to underperforming cows and possible breeding problems. I know that formulating diets can be time consuming and confusing. Hay testing itself takes a little extra time and money. Lucky for you, there is an extension educator in the county that doesn't mind putting pencil to paper, taking hay samples and walking you through the whole process. Take advantage of the resource and put your tax dollars to work.

There will be a workshop offered this fall to help work through the numbers. We will be testing hay ahead of time and then getting together to see what the numbers mean. If you might be interested, let me know. More information will be in the next newsletter.

Hay Moisture Levels

Dan Lima – ANR Educator Belmont County

We have had a very wet June this year and July is starting to look the same. Baling hay has been a tough thing for most farmers in the state. Moisture levels have a direct effect on hay quality. What I have found to be a consistent number in the literature is 20% moisture maximum. To be more specific:

1. Small squares to be 20% or less,
2. Large round, 18% or less and
3. Large squares, 16%

Hay baled at 20% moisture or higher has a high probability of developing mold, which will decrease the quality of hay by decreasing both protein and total nonstructural carbohydrates (TNC) AKA energy! The mold will also make the hay less palatable to livestock and could potentially be toxic, especially for horses. Even hay baled between 15%-20% moisture will experience what is known as "sweating". Sweating, in regard to hay bales, refers to microbial respiration, which will create heat and result in dry matter (DM) loss. A good rule of thumb is that you should expect a 1% DM loss per 1% decrease of moisture after baling. As an example, hay baled at 20% moisture that is stored and dried down to 12%; will result in 8% DM loss.

Understandably, this month has been a double edged sword in regards to losing quality by not baling, or losing quality by baling with moisture levels that are too high. Therefore, my recommendation to ensure adequate livestock nutrition this winter is to have a forage analysis done on the hay baled this year. Once you have those results, develop a corresponding supplemental feed program, if necessary, based on the nutritional requirements of your livestock. Remember that grains are doing exceptionally well this year, so far. This could possibly result in reasonable grain prices for the winter months...



Field covered with flood water.

Minimizing the Damage

- John F. Grimes, OSU Extension Beef Coordinator

The 2015 growing season has proven to be challenging to producers in Ohio. Nearly all crops have been impacted by plentiful and in many cases too much rain. Forage production is certainly no exception to this reality as both hay and pasture production have felt the effects of excessive moisture. One doesn't want to complain too loudly about excessive rainfall given that large areas of the country are still under significant drought. However, this growing season has created some significant management decisions for forage producers.

Very little hay production has not been impacted by excessive rains. Timely harvest has been nearly impossible as evidenced by the fact that some first cuttings have yet to be completed and second cuttings have been significantly delayed. This reality will probably reduce yields in some cases and will certainly reduce feed quality nearly everywhere. There are numerous research studies that indicate significant delays in harvest date will result in lower protein content as well as higher acid detergent fiber and neutral detergent fiber levels.

Results from evaluations at the 2015 Ohio Beef Cattle School indicate the use of laboratory analysis to determine feed quality is a woefully underutilized management tool by producers. When asked "Which of the following best describes your approach to using feed evaluation tests to determine feed quality?", attendees gave the following responses:

- A. I conduct feed analysis on primary feed groups annually. 20%
- B. I conduct feed analysis on primary feed groups only when feed costs are high. 0%
- C. I conduct feed analysis on primary feed groups only when feeds have been impacted by weather conditions. 4%
- D. I rarely conduct feed analysis on primary feed groups. 37%
- E. I never conduct feed analysis on primary feed groups. 38%

As you can see, 75% of the respondents indicated that they rarely or never conduct a feed analysis. Given the anticipated reduction in feed quality due to delayed harvest, 2015 would be the perfect time to start doing analysis of your forages. An analysis of your hay supply will allow you to determine the feed value of the forage which will help you to make educated decisions in regards

to next winter's feeding program. You will know if you have adequate quality for growing animals and females in late gestation or early lactation. If the feed quality is below the required values, the producer can make plans to purchase grains or higher quality hay to compensate for potential ration shortcomings. By performing a timely forage analysis, the producer may also be able to make supplemental feed purchases when supplies and prices may be more favorable.

Pasture situations have been impacted by excessive rains as well but the issues are uniquely different from hay production. Pasture growth has been impressive with the notable exception of poorly drained fields. There have also been excellent growing conditions for weeds. Thankfully, pasture weed control doesn't require a potential three day drying window as does hay production. It does require solid ground conditions to clip or spray pastures for weed control management. Probably the biggest issue created by saturated soils has been foot traffic damage to forage and the soil surface by grazing livestock.

The upcoming fall season offers some options to improve or supplement grazed forages. If pasture damage is significant, interseedings or complete renovations need to be completed by early to mid-September across Ohio. Annual forages such as oats or rye may be planted as a part of a renovation plan for pastures to be seeded in the spring of 2016 or in fields that were not planted earlier in 2015. Do not forget about the tried and true practice of stockpiling. Stockpiled forage growth can begin by mid-July in northern Ohio and August 1 in southern Ohio. 50 lbs. of actual nitrogen per acre applied when the stockpiling period is initiated offers an opportunity to optimize forage yield and quality.

There is no doubt that the growing season in 2015 has created issues for forage and beef cattle producers. We can currently see the impacts of excessive moisture in forage fields around the state in the form of overly mature hay fields and damaged pastures. Unfortunately, these impacts can have long-term impacts on the performance of beef cattle. I encourage you to utilize feed analysis and other aggressive management practices to minimize the damage we have experienced in our hay and pasture fields to help insure a productive and profitable beef enterprise.

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

2015 BEEF AND FORAGE FIELD NIGHT



THURSDAY, AUG. 27, 2015 • 5-8:30 P.M.

Jackson Agricultural Research Station
of the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
019 Standpipe Rd.
Jackson, OH 45640

Program

- Preconditioning Beef Calves
- Water Management and Resource Development
- Grazing Annual Forage Options

Speakers

- Justin Kieffer, OSU Laboratory Animal Resources
- Jeff McCutcheon, OSU Extension
- Ray Smith, UK Extension Professor, Forage Extension Specialist

Sponsors

- Armstrong Ag and Supply
- Cargill Nutrena
- Circle M Farms Feed and Supply
- Jackson Ag Service
- Jackson-Vinton Farm Bureau
- Jackson County Cattlemen's Association
- Walker Machinery

For More Information

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www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/branches/jackson

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. \$5 per person. Registration deadline is August 24. Includes dinner. Dinner begins at 5 p.m. (come early to visit with our sponsors/speakers). Program begins promptly at 6 p.m. Make checks payable to Ohio State University/OARDC. Mail to Scott Payne, 019 Standpipe Road, Jackson, OH 45640. Please detach and return this form with your payment. Thank you.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Number attending/amount enclosed: _____



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The Last Word

Every month here in Athens County is something new. I have really enjoyed the mild summer, especially seeing that Arkansas is in triple digits this week and next. I have always enjoyed overcast and rainy days, but, as always, you can have too much of a good thing. I saw my fields flooded and the pig with six inches of water in her barn (She didn't seem to mind.). A couple of years ago we were faced with drought and a severe hay shortage. This year it looks as if the hay shortage will come from too much moisture. Many producers are also bemoaning the CAUV tax increases (I feel your pain with my own farm). All of these are challenges to what we feel called to do, farming. For those that have been around for a while, challenges are nothing new. As an extension educator, I get to help farmers come up with solutions to their problems. Some take a little work. Others take some real planning and creative thinking. No matter what happens, people will always need food, housing, and clothing. That's the real reason we take up these challenges, no matter what comes our way.



New Berkshire pigs at Farmer Brown's Pigs