

The existence of man depends on six inches of topsoil & the water that falls on it.....Save them

Newsletter



2012 FALL

Feeding cows hay now allows grass to recover after long summer drought, say MU specialists

Story sources: Robert L. Kallenbach, 573-884-2213 Justin Sexten, 573-882-8154 Sept 20, 2012

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Feed hay in the fall and save the new green grass for winter. That plan can result in more feed for drought-stressed Missouri cow herds. University of Missouri Extension specialists urge continued feeding of hay to allow pastures to rebuild root reserves to prepare grass for strong growth next spring.

"It's tempting to turn cows onto new fall growth when rains return after a drought," says Rob Kallenbach, MU forage specialist. There's another reason to hold off, says Justin Sexten, MU beef nutritionist. Cows will need high-quality grass when winter brings wet and cold weather. The grass growing this fall can be stockpiled in pastures for winter grazing.

"Also, feeding hay in fall is easier than in winter," Sexten adds. "This winter, cows will harvest the stockpiled grass pasture. You don't have to start your tractor." The save-the-grass message is one of many tips offered at MU field days and farmer meetings. The theme is: "Life after drought."

At meetings, Sexten demonstrates adding hydrated lime to cornstalks to break down tough cellulose to release nutrients stored in the corn stover. Also, poor-quality baled hay can be sealed under a plastic tarp and treated with anhydrous-ammonia gas to boost protein content and improve digestibility.

Cows turned into pastures now will nip off grass as it grows, Kallenbach says. That harms pastures stunted by summer-long drought. "Let the grass grow as long as there is sunshine, heat and available water. "It seems counterintuitive, now that grass growth has returned, Kallenbach admits. But weak stands of grass need fall growth to rebuild reserves for next spring. During this recovery phase, fall growth can be stockpiled and grazed later.

Sexten adds that fall stockpile grass contains more nutrition than the hay. "Cows will need that higher-quality grass when the weather turns cold." Delaying grazing is a win-win, he said. The growth will aid pasture recovery. And more stockpile will accumulate than if the grass is grazed as it emerges this fall.

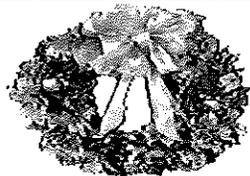
Pastures that didn't grow for months during drought will be in weak condition. Many pastures may need renovation in addition to recovery time, Kallenbach says. "Likely there are bare spots and more weeds. That adds to reduced productivity on pastures recovering from drought." The MU specialists urge caution in interseeding another grass variety into a weakened stand. Vigorous new growth shades and further weakens surviving grass.

Kallenbach recommends complete renovation if grass covers less than 75 percent of the ground. That may require a yearlong process if converting from toxic endophyte-infected Kentucky 31 to new novel-endophyte fescues that don't contain toxins.

Renovation must assure none of the old fescue survives in the newly seeded pastures. That requires the proven spray-smother-spray recipe developed at MU. The old surviving fescue is sprayed with glyphosate herbicide to start eradication. Then a winter annual grass, such as wheat or cereal rye, is drilled into the surviving fescue sprigs. This growth smothers most remaining fescue. Next spring, after grazing or baling the cereal-grain forage, any surviving toxic fescue is sprayed again. Only then should the field be replanted to new grass.

"Toxic fescue is tough to kill," Kallenbach says. "Those 50-year-old stands have survived more than one drought. If you renovate fescue sod, do it right the first time." MU field days and winter meetings are programs from the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Columbia.

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Happy Holidays from: Staff and Board

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Late Fall Weed Control

Tim Schnakenberg, Extension Agronomy Specialist, Galena, MO

Mild weather followed by a frost has landowners wondering if weeds such as thistles, poison hemlock and plantain can still be controlled this time of year. Thinner pastures coming out of a major drought along with adequate moisture this fall has created an ideal environment for weeds to develop that will impact our pastures and hayfields for many years down the road if they are left unchecked.

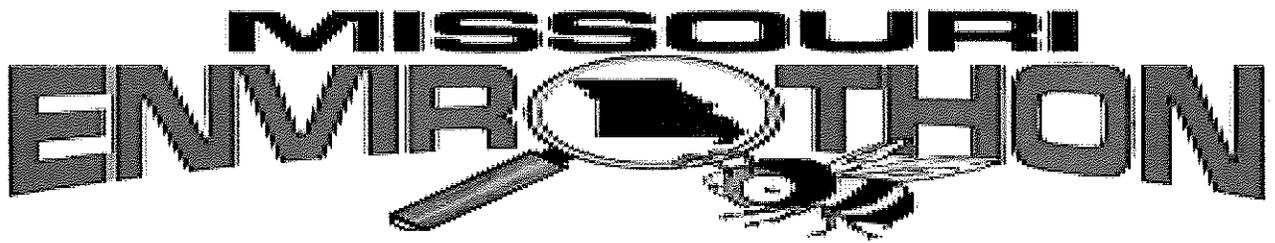
Until we get into consistent cold weather in the low twenties or lower with visible cold effects on the plants, my recommendation is to continue to spray these weeds. Many of these biennial and perennial weeds that are still healthy are tolerant of cooler temperatures and will respond to chemical application on mild fall days. A demonstration we did on a farm in northeast Stone County several years ago in November using the product Milestone on thistles showed excellent results.

Many of the herbicides registered for these problem weeds will work as long as we have had consistent high temperatures in the fifties or higher and sunshine for several days in a row.

Recommended herbicides for thistles include 2,4-D, picloram and 2,4-D products (eg. Grazon), Tordon and GrazonNext. Products for poison hemlock include picloram and 2,4-D products and Tordon. Buckhorn plantain can be more challenging and requires higher rates of 2,4-D, GrazonNext and the picloram and 2,4-D –type products.

Remember, if you don't deal with it now or early next springs, these problems will only get worse and reduce the available grass for grazing or hay on your fields. I highly recommend making a strong effort to get these weeds under control.

Conservation Education



One of the most important responsibilities of soil and water conservation districts is to educate people of all ages about stewardship practices and the wise use of natural resources. In order for there to be an abundance of natural resources for future generations, everyone needs to take responsibility for their actions today. Soil and water conservation districts use a variety of educational tools to focus on this mission. Highlighted here is the Missouri Envirothon which is to be held Nov. 7th at Springfield Nature Center and our Annual Poster Contest which just finished up in October.

The Missouri Envirothon is a problem-solving, natural resource education program for high school students. In the field, teams of students are challenged to hone critical thinking skills and work as a team. Students answer written questions and conduct hands-on investigation of environmental issues in five categories:

Soils/land use. 2. Aquatic ecology 3. Forestry 4. Wildlife 5. Current environmental issues

In addition to a written test, the teams also present an oral presentation solving a specific natural resource issue.

Southwest Mo Grassland Contest

This year's Southwest District Grassland Evaluation contest was held on October 4th, 2012 at the Fair Grove City Park. There were 16 teams that competed with a total of 63 students. The contest is broke up into both a 4H and FFA division. The contest itself is divided into four sections: 1) soils interpretation; 2) plant identification; 3) grassland condition; and 4) wildlife habitat. The participants are divided into four groups and rotate through all four sections at 25 minute intervals. The goal of the contest is to educate the students on the benefits, use and management of grasslands for livestock production and wildlife habitat. Vocational agriculture teachers have said that this is one of the most practical contests that they compete in. The top four teams that placed in the district contest qualified to participate in the State Contest that was held in Ashland later in October.

This year's results are as follows:

FFA: 1st = MOUNT VERNON 2ND =STOCKTON 3RD=AURORA 4TH=HALFWAY

4H: 1ST=AURORA 2ND=MOUNT VERNON(FARM &HOME)BOOSTER 3RD=Halfway 4th= Newton County

HIGH SCORING INDIVIDUAL = SAGE WALRATH (MOUNT VERNON FFA)