



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

# Newsletter

2012 Summer

## Assessments showed 114 Missouri counties meet disaster threshold due to ongoing drought July 10, 2012

Gov. Nixon requests agriculture disaster designation for 114 counties in Missouri following USDA drought damage assessment

JEFFERSON CITY – July 10, 2012 Gov. Jay Nixon today requested that U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack designate 114 counties in Missouri as primary agricultural disaster areas. The designation would permit assistance from the USDA's Farm Service Agency to farmers in those counties that have suffered losses to crops and livestock as a result of the ongoing drought throughout the state.

On June 25, Gov. Nixon requested that the Farm Service Agency assess agricultural damage across the state due to the ongoing extremely dry conditions. The assessment found that 114 Missouri counties meet the disaster threshold of having losses of at least 30 percent of the estimated yield of a single crop or where individual farmers suffer production losses of more than 30 percent.

"Agriculture is the backbone of Missouri's economy, and our farmers are facing extremely difficult conditions because of record heat and low precipitation," Gov. Nixon said. "Our farmers and producers need additional support to help them through these challenges, including the financial assistance that becomes available if this request is granted by Secretary Vilsack."

A disaster designation would allow eligible farmers to be considered for assistance from the USDA's Farm Service Agency, including FSA emergency loans.

<http://governor.mo.gov/newsroom/2012>

## State Cost Share Funding Available in Implementing Conservation Practices

Stone County SWCD has cost share funding available for landowners. Our new fiscal year started July 1, 2012, when we received our cost share allocation. It is our hopes to provide this financial assistance to eligible landowners for conservation practices. Additional funding can be granted should we obligate 70-80% of our funds by the end of our first quarter, being September 2012. This funding opportunity is for all districts across the state of Missouri. We have been conservation planning for grazing management systems and fall seedings for those eligible. If you have any needs or questions, please contact our office 723-8389. Our funding is not related to any federal programs or funding opportunities. Any emergency assistance will come through federal funds through the FSA office in Ozark. Their office number is 1-800-581-6444.

- \*Grazing Management
- \*Riparian Buffer
- \*Well Decommission
- \*Sensitive Areas
- \*Sheet & Rill Erosion
- \*Spring Development
- \*Exclusion of Woods or Stream
- \*Nutrient or Pest Management

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## Dependence on Stockpiled Fescue Will be High This Winter

Tim Schnakenberg, Regional MU Extension Agronomy Specialist, Galena MO

With hay in short supply, Stone County Livestock producers will have a greater dependence on stockpiled fescue this fall and winter. Even though our fescue fields are fully dormant during the dry summer, most of them should recover once we get cooler weather and more rain.

Compared to the current price of hay, the cost of applying nitrogen fertilizer to fescue pastures can be a very good option for producers. If you stop and do the math, it normally costs twice as much to feed a cow herd with average quality hay than to ration out fertilized fescue pasture. This year with low hay supplies and current hay prices, the figures are more than three times as much to feed a cow compared to stockpiled fescue.

Just ahead of fall green up, this will be a good year to apply 40-50 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre on fescue pastures. Then, the producer must close gates and wait as long as possible to open gates back up and ration the forage. Most years you can wait until December if we have a good fall. This prolongs the practice of feeding hay considerably and every day the farmer doesn't have to feed hay is that much money and time saved.

The fewer days you have to bring feed to the cows, involving time and tractor fuel, the less it's going to cost in the long-run. This is one of the easiest ways to reduce the outflow of cash on a farm. When given the opportunity, most farmers would rather graze their livestock on high quality 15-20 % protein fescue than to buy and feed expensive 8% protein hay throughout the entire winter.

Being a cool season forage it can stay in condition throughout the winter. In October new growth can test as high as 20% protein and will drop only about 2 percentage points a month as we go through the winter, unless there is heavy ice early in the winter.

Using Management-Intensive Grazing in your system can efficiently utilize the fescue. With this system, you can ration the grass more effectively while giving unused pastures a rest. Another ideal approach is to ration the fescue by strip-grazing, using temporary fence that is moved every few days to give the livestock only what they need without wasting the grass.

Keep in mind, there are state cost share programs available to assist with costs of implementing a Managed-Intensive Grazing system. The program assists technically and financially with components such as water development, water distribution and fencing.

## Drought Conditions Cause Concern Among Cattle Owners for Life-Threatening Toxicity in Livestock

GALENA, Mo. – For the second year in a row, livestock producers are at risk of cattle losses in some fields due to nitrate or prussic acid toxicity, according to Tim Schnakenberg, an agronomy specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

"The biggest concern is for pastures that contain sorghum sudan, millet and Johnsongrass. These forages can accumulate nitrate levels during periods of drought, especially after significant amounts of nitrogen fertilizer or poultry litter have been applied to the crop," said Schnakenberg.

In drought situations, fescue tends to go dormant and forages like Johnsongrass may continue to stay lush and desirable to livestock. According to Schnakenberg, the nitrate levels are not only a concern for grazing, but also in hay. Nitrate stays at the same level in hay as it was the day it was cut. "Excessive nitrates can be poisonous to livestock. Nitrates are converted to nitrites by bacteria in the rumen. If this conversion is interrupted by drought, nitrites can build up and interfere with movement of oxygen through the blood stream and very high levels of nitrite results in asphyxiation. Among bred animals, nitrate accumulation can also lead to abortions," said Schnakenberg.

The danger is not passed even immediately after a rain. It takes at least four to five days following a good soaking rain before nitrate accumulations in forage may drop to a safer level according to Schnakenberg. Under very dry conditions, other crops like corn can have high nitrate levels if high rates of nitrogen are applied. Much of the corn planted in the Ozarks was intended, and fertilized for grain. With the drought, its season was cut short and much of it was chopped for silage. If the corn was at the best stage for silage (60-70 percent moisture), the nitrate level can be reduced during the fermentation period 20-50 percent. If too dry or too wet, it may not reduce as much as expected. Fermentation will take at least 21 days to complete. There is no way to know the nitrate level unless it is tested. Some extension centers are equipped to do a quick test of lower stalks of plants to determine if the nitrate levels are a concern or not. "Nitrates accumulate the most in the lower stalk. If they are a concern, it's advisable to send a sample to a lab to get a quantitative analysis from several samples containing the entire plant that will be consumed," said Schnakenberg.

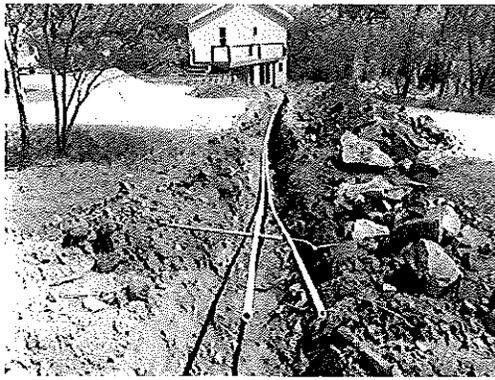
Prussic acid is another toxin that producers should be aware of. This primarily occurs in lush standing sorghum, Johnsongrass, and to some extent sorghum sudangrass, that is less than 18-20 inches in height. It has also occurred in Indiangrass that is less than eight inches in height. In a drought the toxicity is heightened if there is nothing else available to eat in a pasture. "Prussic acid dissipates after the crop dries down after cutting for hay or grows out of this stage of growth. But, because of the difficulty in sampling for this problem, a toxicity test is not considered reliable."

For more information, contact any of these MU Extension agronomy specialists in southwest Missouri: Tim Schnakenberg in Stone County, (417) 357-6812; Jay Chism in Barton County, (417) 682-3579; John Hobbs in McDonald County, (417) 223-4775 or Brie Menjoulet in Hickory County, (417) 745-6767.

# SCHOOL NEWS



We would like to say thank you to Galena, Hurley, Reed Spring, Crane and Blue Eye's fourth grade classes for participating in our Info-Ed demonstrations back in the spring. We believe that the children of the present, are the leaders of the future. The majority of America's consumers are disconnected from agriculture in that most have no idea of where their food comes from. In the last 50 years, the disconnect between people and their food has grown exponentially in relationship to the number of people who are no longer working in agriculture. As little as 60 years ago, over half of the people in the U.S. were involved in agriculture. Today, that number has dropped to 2%. Our info-ed demonstration helps the students understand the purpose of soil, how soil is made, and what comes from soil. The students enjoyed making their own soil profiles and eating the "yummy" soil cups.



Many times the effluent has to be pumped up the hill away from the house and lake to



Pressurized drip system lateral field under construction.

According to our water quality scientists, the effluent from the 32 failing systems would generate enough nutrients to produce more than 20,000 pounds of wet "pea soup" algae. Of course not all of those nutrients go into the lake but considering the number of homes that were right near the lake or a stream, and the condition of most of the systems, the project has definitely reduced the potential for algae growth and improved the quality and clarity of the water in the Upper White River basin.

Ozarks Water Watch expects to help with the replacement of another 18 to 22 failing septic systems in the remainder of 2012 and at least 50 in 2013. There is still about \$800,000 available to homeowners for combinations of grants and 0% interest loans. Anyone in the Upper White River Basin in Missouri with a failing septic system (see map below) can apply for this grant/loan program. Our information/application package is available for download on our website. If you are interested in learning more about this project, you are invited to contact Ronna Haxby with Ozarks Water Watch at 417-739-5001 or [ronna@ozarkswaterwatch.org](mailto:ronna@ozarkswaterwatch.org).

