IOWA FORAGE AND GRASSLAND COUNCIL

The Forager

March 2011

900 Des Moines Street, Des Moines, IA 50309 // Phone: 515.262.8323 // Fax: 515.262.8960

Iowa Forage and Grassland Council President Recognized for Service to National Forage Organization

Dr. Byron Sleugh, Past President of the Iowa Forage and Grassland Council (IFGC) was awarded the Presidential Citation by The American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC). The AFGC's Presidential Citation recognizes outstanding accomplishments in the development, production, utilization, or promotion of forages.

Sleugh's service to the American Forage and Grassland Council was cited by Miles Kuhn, forage agronomist with the FFR Cooperative in Lafayette, Indiana and AFGC president. Kuhn noted Sleugh's outstanding service to the national organization and shared that the Presidential Citation was awarded to Sleugh for his "passion for the forage industry and dedicated involvement with AFGC." Sleugh competed in and won the Emerging Scientist competition in 2000, brought students to the AFGC national conference for several years to participate in the forage bowl, and worked with others to organize symposia, in both 2009 and 2010, focusing on forage management and tall fescue. Sleugh serves on the board of directors of the AFGC and spoke at the forage industry breakfast this past June at the Annual Conference. Kuhn concluded, "your willingness to step in and participate on the national level to promote forages is greatly appreciated!"

Dr. Byron Sleugh of West Des Moines, Iowa is a forage agronomist and field scientist for the Range/Pasture and vegetation management group with Dow AgroSciences. He conducts field research and helps develop new products, working with university cooperators and supporting the sales force in Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Sleugh also serves as a resource for farmers and land managers with questions about weed and brush management as well as noxious and invasive weed management in rangeland, pastures and other non crop areas such as CRP, prairies, and other natural areas.

Sleugh earned his master's and doctorate degrees in agronomy from Iowa State University. He also served as an associate professor in the Department of Agriculture at Western Kentucky University for seven years before returning to Iowa in 2006.

As Past President of the Iowa Forage and Grassland Council, Sleugh directs support and development of an annual conference, forage-based field days, and membership services for the non-profit organization.

IFGC Education Grant Program

Written by: Mark Fehseke, Iowa Forage & Grassland Education Committee

Hosting a Pasture Walk? Need some help to cover costs? IFGC is here to help! Your Iowa Forage & Grassland Council Education Committee continues to fund the education grants program in 2011. This program is designed to assist with funding forage education activities in Iowa. A common uses of the education grant program is helping fund refreshments at pasture walks and field days. Many other sponsors will not fund these items. IFGC, however, may fill in this needed area. The IFGC education grant program typically funds a dozen or more projects each year in as many counties. Hundreds of people attend these IFGC sponsored events each year.

The applicant or applicant's organization must be a member of IFGC to be eligible. The applicant must be approved for funding prior to the event. They must agree to recognize IFGC as one of the sponsors of their event and distribute IFGC membership applications to their audience. They must then submit bills for reimbursement up to a maximum of $100 per event.

If you have a forage-based educational event coming up this year and need funding assistance, please consider IFGC as a sponsor, and apply for an IFGC Education Grant. For a copy of the application, contact your local ISU Extension or NRCS office. You can write: Mark Fehseke, 418 S Franklin St., Corydon, Iowa 50060 or email Mark at: dibbikim@yahoo.com.

Checklist for Spring Forage Seedings

Written by: Stephen Barnhart, ISU Department of Agronomy

Forage seedings can be made in the spring as soon as a suitable seedbed can be prepared. Spring seedings made after mid-May may not be as successful, due to rapid drying of surface soils.

Site preparation
Clear brush, fill gullies and take soil samples. Lime and fertilize according to needs shown by soil testing. For most efficient lime use, it is best to have needed lime applied and incorporated six months to a year before planting.

Seedbed Preparation
Destroy sod by shallow plowing or disking, followed by necessary secondary seedbed preparation operations. Seedbed firmness is very important. Using a cultipacker or roller on tilled seedbeds before planting is recommended. Another alternative is to use a non-selective herbicide to kill the old sod. Incorporate needed fertilizer before seedbed preparation, or surface topdress on killed sod sites.

Species and Variety Selection
Select species based on the desired use, persistence and tolerance to site conditions. The Iowa State University Extension publication Selecting Forage Species, PM 1792 covers characteristics of many forage legumes and grasses used in Iowa, and provides suggested seeding mixtures and seeding rates for various situations.

Seeding
Seed in one of the following ways on a well prepared seedbed.

- Use a grassland drill with depth-control and press wheels or a cultipacker-roller type seeder designed for small seeded forage legumes and grasses. Plant at a ¼ to ¾ inch depth.
- Use a grain drill, equipped with small seeded forage boxes, as a broadcast seeder for small seeded legumes and grasses to prevent small forage seed from being planted too deeply. Cultipack or roll after seeding.
- Broadcast seed onto a firm, tilled seedbed and cultipack or roll for shallow seed coverage and seed-to-soil contact.

Or, if planting into a killed sod, or un-tilled crop residue field, use a no-till drill, control seeding depth to no deeper than ½ inch, and adjust press wheels to provide good seed-to-soil contact.

On sloping sites – consider erosion protection
Where there is a risk for erosion on tilled seedbeds, one to two bushels of oats per acre or a reduced seeding rate of another spring cereal grain may be seeded with forage mixtures as a companion crop or cover crop. The cereal grain will serve first as erosion protection, but will increasingly become competition for the newly planted forages. The sooner the cereal competition can be removed, the quicker the new forage seeding will establish. Cereal companion crops may be grazed, cut for silage or hay, or harvested later as grain and straw with associated longer completion. Particularly in dry springs, removing companion crops as early as possible can conserve moisture for the new seeding.

Management After Establishment
For weed and competition control, graze new seedings rotationally or mow (clip) sequentially, during the first few months of the establishment to limit unneeded competition for light, moisture and plant nutrients. Developing seedlings will establish more quickly. Also avoid any cutting or grazing new seedings after early September to improve winter hardening.

For some mixtures or pure stands, selective pre-plant or post-emergence herbicides may be used in place of a companion crop. This option may only be appropriate on sites where erosion is not a risk. Seek help from your agricultural professionals when selecting and using herbicide for weed management in new forage seedings. Be sure to read and follow the label when using any agricultural chemical. Also take into account any harvest or grazing withdrawal periods called for.
Fertilize in later years according to soil test recommendations.

Graze rotationally and avoid over grazing to maintain ground cover and animal grains.

Remove grazing livestock and limit grazing for the last four to six weeks of the growing season to allow plants to adequately winter-harden. Use management practices that retain adequate plant cover if cutting or grazing after fall dormancy.

For more information, see the following Iowa State University Extension publications - Selecting Forage Species, PM 1792 and Steps to Establish and Maintain Legume-Grass Pastures, PM 1008.

Stephen K. Barnhart is the ISU Extension forage agronomist. He can be contacts by phone at 515-24-7835 or by e-mail at

Up the Creek
Proper Management Ensures Water Quality When Cattle Drink from Creeks

Written by: Dan Miller, Progressive Farmer Senior Editor, Thursday, February 3, 2011

It's a long-held belief of pasture management: Give cattle access to streams and they will stir up a nasty brew of fecal matter, biological contamination, sediment and nutrient loadings. The solution to watering cattle has been to pump it upland to troughs located away from the streams and creeks.

Jim Russell, professor of animal science at Iowa State University, is working to develop practices that allow cattle to drink from the streams, but also encourages them not to lounge in it. They have come upon these ideas by watching the cattle.

Jim Russell, professor of animal science at Iowa State University, is working to develop practices that allow cattle to drink from the streams, but also encourages them not to lounge in it. *(Progressive Farmer image by Grant Heilman, Grant Heilman Photography Inc.)*

From those observations they have evidence showing that a well-designed pasture-management plan may allow cattle access to streams and creeks with minimal damage to water quality. What's more, these management practices are competitive with the cost of exclusion fencing and water pumps.

In 30-acre pastures on farms in south-central Iowa, Russell's team has found that cattle really don't hang in the water as much as expected.

The percent of time they are in the water is lower than often, Russell says. During the summer, with full access to the stream, the cattle Russell's team watched spent about 2 percent of the time in the water. Even during the hottest of summer months, they averaged 4 percent of their time standing in the stream. At night, the cattle tended to stay out of the water. Cattle in these pastures spent no more than 14 percent of their time within 110 feet of the stream.

When the cattle are confined to riparian areas -- in this study, 110-foot strips on both sides of the stream -- they spent no more than 0.2 percent of their time in the water. But they can create nutrient, erosion and runoff threats to the water if they are allowed to stay there long enough to create bare spots and allow manure to accumulate.

But by limiting the grazing along the streams -- Russell calls it "flash grazing" -- the damage is greatly reduced. Flash grazing means the paddock is never grazed more than four days and the grass is grazed to no lower than 4 inches in height.

The proximity of the cattle to the streambank does not seem to create a significant erosion problem, as long as access is managed. Streambank erosion, Russell argues, is due more to the velocity of moving water than to grazing.

To test the idea, Russell designed a stabilized crossing structure that allows cattle limited access to streams.

These are crossings stabilized with a fiber mat and polyethylene webbing, covered with stones. The crossings are limited in size, about 16 feet wide, with electric fencing along the sides. Beyond the limits of the fencing are grassed buffer strips to control precipitation runoff. Fenced lanes, a couple of hundred feet long, lead up and away from the crossing.

In 2004, construction of a 16-x-80-foot crossing cost $4,347, not including labor. Additional investments in crushed rock are necessary to maintain the crossings annually. In comparison, installing underground PVC pipe and frost-free faucets cost $2.30 per foot.

With the crossing, Russell found the cattle spent little time (less than 1 percent) actually standing in the water. "The animals don't loaf in the water," he says. "They drink and move on. The stabilized crossing seemed to be effective when used with the riparian buffer."

Russell has tested stream water flowing into and out of an area of managed pastures on 13 cooperating farms in southern Iowa. He finds little difference in water quality. This does not mean the water is uncontaminated, only that those cattle don't appear to add significant new contamination under managed grazing programs. Russell does believe that upstream contamination, when no cattle are present, may come from wildlife, companion animals (horses, dogs), humans and their septic systems.

Russell's research is funded by the USDA-CSREES and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Also working with Russell are Mat Haan, former research associate, and Doug Bear and Kirk Schwarte, graduate students at Iowa State University.

This article can be found at: http://online.dtn.com/online/common/link.do?symbolicName=/ag/news/template1&forceNavUpdate=false&vendorReference=5d48d712-1369-4cad-8850-e18fb07f1620__1294861528434.

Iowa Forage & Grassland Council
900 Des Moines Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Check the Condition of Recovering Forage Stands

Written by: Stephen K. Barnhart, ISU Department of Agronomy

Most forage crops are planted and managed as perennial crops. With careful selection, grass and legume species and varieties can be planted that are capable of surviving normal Iowa winters. Even with good fertility and fall harvest or grazing management, some plants, and even entire stands, can be damaged during the winter.

Late-winter and early-spring is a good time to evaluate existing hay and pasture stands for winter injury.

A previous ICM News article, Evaluating Hay & Pasture Stands for Winter Injury, discusses in more detail some assessment methods that you can use.

Splitting taproots to evaluate general health of stand.

Stephen K. Barnhart is the ISU Extension forage agronomist. He can be contacts by phone at 515-24-7835 or by e-mail at sbarnhar@iastate.edu.

The 2011 Iowa Forage & Grassland Council Conference

Monday evening, November 21 – Tuesday, November 22

at the Airport Holiday Inn Conference Center in Des Moines, Iowa

To make room reservations call 515.287.2400

Don't miss it!

IFGC Education Grant Program

Hosting a Pasture Walk? Need some help to cover costs? IFGC is here to help!

Members of IFGC needing help to cover costs of food, refreshments, materials, speaker expenses, or similar items can apply for IFGC funding. Up to $100 per event is possible.

Get an application by visiting your local NRCS or Extension Office, Or by writing or emailing Mark Fehseke at:
418 S Franklin ST, Corydon, Iowa 50060.
dibbikim@yahoo.com