IOWA FORAGE AND GRASSLAND COUNCIL

The Forager

Fall 2013

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2013 IFGC Conference and Annual Meeting

The 2013 Iowa Forage and Grassland Conference will be held on November 25 & 26, 2013 at the Des Moines Airport Holiday Inn. The Iowa Forage and Grassland Council strives to provide timely information to Iowa's forage and grassland producers. Attendees can count on walking away with new knowledge that they can put to immediate use.

Registration will open at 5:30 p.m. on Monday evening followed by round-table discussions from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday evening arrivals are invited to join speakers, vendors, and board members for some Monday Night Football and social time at the hotel.

Tuesday will begin with a general session followed by a series of breakout sessions. The IFGC annual meeting and banquet lunch will be held mid-day followed by presentation of the 2013 IFGC Hay Producer and the 2013 IFGC Livestock/Grazing Producer awards.

Make sure to check out http://iowaforage.org/ in upcoming weeks for a final agenda and full registration details as they are developed further. Also, please encourage anyone interested in forage and grassland issues to attend. Hotel reservations may be made at 515-287-2400. We look forward to seeing you in November.

SAVE THE DATE!

IFGC Conference & Annual Meeting

November 25-26, 2013

Board of Director Nominations Open

Are you interested in serving on the Iowa Forage and Grassland Council? You, as an IFGC member, have the opportunity to run for an open board positions.

Board *terms will begin January 2014 and run through December 2016.* The board meets quarterly and typically the meetings are in Des Moines.

Please contact Joan O'Brien with the IFGC office at 515-262-8323 or joano@agribiz.org if you are interested in serving.

Managing the Fall Growth in Hay Fields: Considerations on the "Killing Freeze"

By: Stephen K. Barnhart, Extension Forage Specialist, Iowa State University

As night time temperatures dip lower hay growers begin to consider their 'end game' for the seasons forage fields. If you turn to newsletters from Agronomists there seems to be some mixed messages. Among the management guidelines are:

- "alfalfa requires four or more hours at 24 degrees F or less for a killing freeze."
- "that we do not need to wait for a killing frost to take the last cutting; we must only wait until it is so cool that little or no regrowth will occur."
- One goes as far as to ask, "What is a killing freeze for alfalfa?," and then says that, "alfalfa tops don't die at any set temperature. Some parts freeze back, while some parts closer to the ground may remain green into the early winter months!"

Who is right? There is a bit of truth in all of the statements.

Top leaves and stem tips generally do freeze at around 23 or 24 degrees F; but the lower part of the plant may remain alive for weeks longer than that.

By mid-October, alfalfa is responding increasingly to shorter days and cooler temperatures, and growth slow significantly, sometimes called dormancy.

Essentially, for acceptable winter survival and rapid recovery the following spring, we need to provide enough time during the fall months for the plants to accumulate sufficient carbohydrates and amino acids, and not cut so soon in the autumn that the plants attempt a late regrowth and begin to use those accumulated reserves.

So, what about the killing freeze? It may not be necessary, but it is an indicator that we can probably harvest the last growth of the season without jeopardizing stand persistence.

Where do I weigh in on this? I guess I will stay with my guidance of….. *'you need to give the forage stand 4 to 6 weeks of uninterrupted growth through* September and early October; then, if you think that you need the forage, harvest close to the killing freeze or later."

Still Taking Applications!!! Grant Money for Forage Events

Iowa Forage and Grassland Council is offering education grants to members holding forage events in 2013. IFGC can help offset costs for refreshments, mailings, speaker fees, and other associated costs. Applications up to $100 will be considered.

Send applications to:
Mark Fehseke
IFGC Education Chair
dibbikim@yahoo.com

Haven't got an application? Contact Mark!

Effect of Frost on Pasture Weed Control

By: Bob Hartzler, Extension Weed Management Specialist, Department of Agronomy, Iowa State University

Fall can be a good time for growers and custom applicators to handle certain weed problems in pastures and other non-crop areas, thereby avoiding the spring field work rush. We often receive questions on how late fall treatments can be made while maintaining their effectiveness. The questions often focus on what impact frost has on the susceptibility of weeds to herbicides.

Most perennial and biennial weeds found in Iowa are relatively cold-tolerant and can be controlled with applications made following a few light frosts. I conducted studies in 1992 and 1993 in central Iowa to determine the effectiveness of fall 2,4-D applications for musk thistle control. The experiment was conducted in a bluegrass pasture with a heavy musk thistle infestation. Musk thistle rosettes were 4 to 12" in diameter at the time of application. The pasture was being grazed so the sward height was approximately 4" and allowed good coverage of the rosettes.

Table 1. Musk thistle control with fall 2,4-D applications.

Date of application	Temperature at application (°F)	Days below 32°F[1]	1 qt LVE (4lb/gal)	2 qt LVE (4lb/gal)
1992			-- % musk thistle control --	
Oct. 1	70	0	98	100
Oct. 22	75	4	100	98
Nov. 5	30	11	90	95
Nov. 23	35	22	37	50
LSD (0.05)			14	
1993				
Oct. 11	55	2	90	93
Oct. 22	60	4	93	100
Nov. 10	50	15	34	40
LSD (0.05)			25	

Source: B. Hartzler, ISU.

[1]Number of days in fall with temperatures below 32°F prior to application.

[2]Musk thistle control was evaluated in early May.

Effective control of musk thistle was achieved with applications made after several nights when temperatures fell below 32 degrees (Table 1). The growth habit of musk thistle provides protection from freezing temperatures since the leaves are close to the soil surface. Increasing the 2,4-D rate to 2 qts/A did not significantly improve musk thistle control in these studies.

Musk thistle normally acts as a biennial in which plants require two years to complete their life cycle. In the first year the plant produces a basal rosette, in the second year the stem elongates, produces the seedhead, and then the plant dies. Under certain environmental conditions musk thistle can act as an annual, and will flower during the year in which it germinates. Due to this trait, flowering musk thistle plants may be evident in fields treated in the previous fall. However, the convenience of fall applications may be worth this potential for reduced control since only a small percentage of plants display this trait.

We evaluated only straight 2,4-D in these studies; however, we would expect similar results from other products registered for use in pastures. In most situations it would be advantageous to use a combination treatment such as 2,4-D + Banvel, Crossbow, etc. to provide more consistent results or a broader spectrum of control.

In summary, many perennial and biennial weeds can still be effectively killed after a few hard frosts. Research with quackgrass and Roundup actually found greater translocation of the herbicide after the first frost than before frost. Plants having a prostrate growth habit such as musk thistle will be more tolerant of frost since they are protected somewhat by heat released by the soil. With most plants it is possible to determine whether the foliage has been severely affected by frosts, thus scouting the field prior to application is important to ensure that active foliage is still present.

Farmers Commit Over $2.8 Million to Voluntary Water Quality Practices

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey has announced that Iowa farmers have submitted applications for the $2.8 million in cost share funding that has been made available to help implement new nutrient reduction practices on their farm.The funds were available to help farmers try new practices targeted at protecting water quality and the state funds could not be more than 50 percent of the total cost of the practice, so Iowa farmers will be providing at least another $2.8 million to support these water quality practices.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship received applications covering 120,680 acres from 1,096 different farmers seeking to participate in the program. That includes 109,415 acres of cover crops, 7,321 acres of nitrification inhibitor, 2,675 acres of no-till and 1,268 acres of strip-till. Farmers in 97 of 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state received funding.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey

"Iowa farmers are very conservation minded. The tremendous response to this program shows again that they will respond voluntarily when presented with science-based solutions to conservation challenges," Northey said. "It is exciting that nearly 1,100 farmers were willing to put their own money towards trying new practices aimed at protecting water quality and improving soil health."

Farmers are encouraged to still reach out to their local Soil and Water Conservation District office as there may be other programs available to help them implement these voluntary, science-based water quality practices on their farm.

Only farmers not already utilizing the practice were eligible to apply for assistance and cost share was only available on up to 160 acres. The cost share rate for cover crops was $25 per acre and was $10 for farmers trying no-till or strip till. Farmers using a nitrapyrin nitrification inhibitor when applying fall fertilizer were eligible to receive $3 per acre.

"This has been a great kick-off to our water quality initiative and we look forward to continuing to work with farmers to put more practices on the ground to better protect water quality here in Iowa and down-stream as well," Northey said.

The Department received $3 million in one-time funding to support statewide science-based water quality practices over the next five years and has now committed $2.8 million to support these science-based practices this fall.

2013 Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards Ceremony

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy

Sixty-three recipients of the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award were recognized at a ceremony held at the Penningroth Center on the Iowa State Fairgrounds during the Iowa State Fair.

At a lunch sponsored by Hagie Manufacturing, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy spoke to the honorees and other attendees on EPA's role in rural America and the Agency's partnership with the agricultural community to protect our water, land, and air.

The Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards are a joint effort between the Governor, Lt. Governor, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources and they seek to recognize the exemplary voluntary actions of farmers that improve or protect the environment and natural resources of our state while also encouraging other farmers to follow in their footsteps by building success upon success.