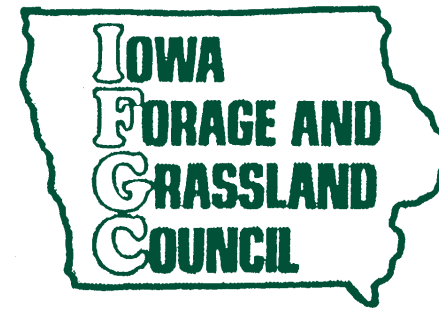




Iowa Forage & Grassland Council
900 Des Moines Street
Des Moines, IA 50309



The Forager

Fall 2012

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2012 Iowa Forage and Grassland Conference

The 2012 Iowa Forage and Grassland Conference will be held on November 19 & 20, 2012 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. This year's conference will address the use of grazing management to control risks of nonpoint source pollution of pasture streams, agronomic and conservation implications of the corn stover harvest, hay production, economic considerations of corn stover and Farm Bill programs for assistance on forage and grassland.

The IFGC annual meeting will be held and awards will be presented to the 2012 IFGC Hay Producer and the 2012 IFGC Livestock/Grazing Producer following a banquet lunch.

Monday evening arrivals are invited to join speakers, vendors, and board members for some Monday Night Football and social time at the hotel. Conference registration and additional details are included in this newsletter. Please find additional conference details at: <http://iowaforage.org/> as they are developed further, and invite 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.

CRP Emergency Grazing Extended

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack issued a two-month extension for emergency grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres, freeing up forage and feed for ranchers as they look to recover from this challenging time, on August 30. This flexibility given to ranchers is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) assistance extended to producers impacted by the drought, which has included opening CRP and other conservation acres to emergency haying and grazing, lowering the interest rate for emergency loans, and working with crop insurance companies to provide flexibility to farmers.

"It is also important that our farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses have the tools they need to be successful in the long term. That's why President Obama and I continue calling on Congress to pass a comprehensive, multi-year Food, Farm and Jobs Bill that will continue to strengthen American agriculture in the years to come, ensure comprehensive disaster assistance for livestock, dairy and specialty crop producers, and provide certainty for farmers and ranchers," said Vilsack in the department's press release.

To assist producers, USDA is permitting farmers and ranchers in drought stricken states that have been approved for emergency grazing to extend grazing on CRP land through Nov. 30, 2012, without incurring an additional CRP rental payment reduction. The period normally allowed for emergency grazing lasts through Sept. 30. The extension applies to general CRP practices and producers must submit a request to their Farm Service Agency county office indicating the acreage to be grazed. USDA's continuing efforts to add feed to the marketplace benefits all livestock producers, including dairy, during this drought. Expanded haying and grazing on CRP acres, along with usage of cover crops, has begun providing much needed feed to benefit all livestock.

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IFGC Exhibitor Registration Now Open

Exhibitors are an important part of the IFGC Annual Conference. Currently, IFGC is accepting exhibitor registrations for this event which will be held on November 19 & 20, 2012 at the Des Moines Airport Holiday Inn.

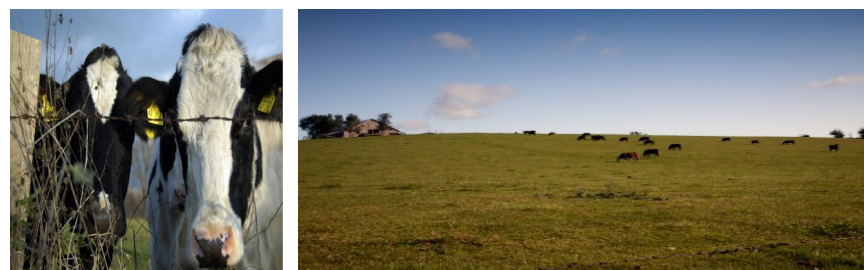
An 8-foot table will be available for each exhibitor. Exhibitors can reserve a booth for \$125 and non-profits receive a reduced rate of \$60, if your exhibitor registration form is received by November 12, 2012. After November 12, the booth rate will increase to \$150 and \$85 for non-profits. One complementary registration to the conference will be provided to you with the purchase of a table.

Contact the IFGC office at 515-262-8323 to request an exhibitor registration form or to register over the phone.

TIME TO REGISTER!

IFGC Annual Convention

November 19-20, 2012



Management Tips for Drought-stressed Forages

Written by: **Stephen K. Barnhart, Extension Forage Specialist, Iowa State University**
Email: sbarnhar@iastate.edu

The Midwest U.S. has seen some of the most extreme drought conditions of recent memory. Some rain has come recently for most of this area, but not enough for most of us to feel comfortable about. Pastures may still be in poor condition. Many hayfields are showing enough recovery to maybe yield at least one more cutting. Regionally, hay supplies are tight and prices are high. Forage management considerations are many. Here are some things to think about as you prioritize your options.

Hay and Pastures: the goal is to help keep perennial forage plants 'perennial'

During the fall weeks, perennial forage legumes and grasses respond to shortening days and cooling average daily temperatures and progress through their gradual "cold hardening" process. The genetics of the variety and local climatic conditions determine how cold tolerant the plant crown and taproot can be during the winter months. Most successfully winterhardened perennial forage legumes and grasses can withstand soil temperatures in the crown area to about 0 to 4 degrees F without crown tissue damage. At lower soil and crown temperatures, varieties and individual plants will vary in the degree of cold damage they may experience.

To best acquire their potential for winter survival, these forage plants should get 5 to 6 weeks of uninterrupted growth to accumulate root carbohydrates and proteins before going dormant for the winter. A 'killing freeze' is about 23-24F for several hours. Then, no more cutting or grazing until next season.

If you do decide to cut one more hay cutting or grazing, it is important to manage fall harvests or grazings to give the plants the best chance for strong winter survival. It is best to wait until at or after the killing freeze (23-24 F) for the last hay cutting, then leave a 5-6 inch stubble. It is not recommended to take a late season harvest from a new (2012) seeding. The same goes for late season growth management of pastures. Try to allow 3 to 4 weeks of fall recovery before a killing freeze, and then, if you are going to graze again, leave an average of 3 inches or so of lower stem bases on the grasses.

The practical problem with these management strategies is that it involves removing livestock from pasture. And no more hay harvest – in an already hay shortage season. I can't decide what is most important, for you.

Fertilization. Fall is a good time to soil test and fertilize both hay and pastures with needed potassium (K) and phosphorus (P). This will help drought-stressed forage stands to overwinter and improve regrow and yields next spring. Applying 25 to 40 lbs of nitrogen to grass pastures during the last few weeks of their fall growth will aid in stimulating more fall tillering (branching) and for more vigorous recovery in the spring.

Give recovering hay and pasture stands time to 'catch up' or regain more vigor next spring

If fall recovery was not favorable, or you did cut or graze late in the season in 2012, the recovering forage plant may still be under some physiological stress. Hay and pasture plants will benefit from allowing a bit more recovery and growing time next spring before they are cut or grazed. For best 'recovery management' delay the first cut of alfalfa stands until they reach early- to mid-bloom. For pastures, allow 3 to 4 inches of growth in the spring before livestock turnout.

Repairing and Reseeding

Consider 'interseeding' or 'frostseeding' drought-thinned pastures next late winter or early spring. Frostseeding is the broadcasting of legumes or additional grass seed in late winter when the last few weeks of night-freeze and daytime-thaw aids in seed coverage. Interseeding is using a drill to no-till legumes or forage grasses into an existing sod. Spring interseeding dates are mid-March through late-April.

Frostseeding works best with legumes on the thinnest, least competitive sod areas. Grasses are generally more effectively established with interseeding than with frostseeding. With both frostseeding and interseeding, having the existing pasture sod grazed closely (like many of our pastures following the summer drought stresses) reduces early season competition. Further competition for shade, sunlight and soil moisture can be reduced by timely and thoughtful rotational grazing for the first few months of new seedling establishment. See the article in this newsletter on pasture repairing pastures for more information on the steps that will improve your probability of success.

Forage Testing in 2012-2013 is Critical

Written by: **Joe Sellers, ISU Extension and Outreach, and Steve Barnhart, Department of Agronomy**
Email: sellers@iastate.edu & sbarnhar@iastate.edu

It pays to test your livestock's feedstuffs every year, but it is critical to test forages this fall due to extreme variation in quality of silage and hay produced during the drought of 2012. Iowa State University Extension agronomist Steve Barnhart and beef program specialist Joe Sellers said many producers have harvested silage from drought stressed corn, and proper ration development depends on knowing the nutrient content of that feed. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) forage and cornstalk bales harvested this year also will be variable in quality, making forage analysis essential.

"When testing corn silage, it is best to wait at least 30 days, until ensiling is complete," Barnhart said. "Corn silage is generally tested for protein, energy and other nutrient values, but producers also should add a nitrate test to the order, to determine if excessive nitrate levels have persisted through the ensiling process. Producers should take a good representative sample from the pile, trench or bag silage storage shortly after feeding is started."

CRP acres were released for emergency haying in Iowa with hay harvested across the state in August.

"The forage types present in CRP are quite diverse, due to seeding mixes used and status of mid contract management," Sellers said. "With this diverse plant mix, producers should request that their forage testing laboratory use 'wet chemical analysis' tests rather than the near infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) test."

Most laboratories offer both options for forage testing, he said. However, NIRS analyses use calibrations established with more traditional forage species mixtures, and may not satisfactorily analyze this more non-traditional mix of forages.

Elevated concentrations of nitrates also may be a concern in baled corn stalks or summer annual forages such as sorghums or millets harvested and stored as dry bales. Testing for nutrient content and nitrates also should be completed for those forages, particularly when harvested following drought conditions, Barnhart said.

Producers can work with their local farm suppliers to arrange forage testing, or can contact laboratories listed in ISU Extension publication 1098A, Forage Testing Laboratories, available for free download. For assistance with forage sampling recommendations and test report interpretation, and to develop rations, contact your local ISU Extension and Outreach beef program specialist.

Cover Crop & 2013 Crop Insurance

William J. Murphy, Risk Management Agency (RMA) Administrator released a bulletin in August to address crop insurance policyholders' questions on planting a cover crop on damaged or destroyed acreage for haying or grazing purposes without impacting their insurability of crops planted in 2013.

The bulletin details RMA's intentions to file Special Provisions statements to allow haying or grazing of cover crops without jeopardizing the insurability of planted 2013 spring crops. To assure any spring planted crops in 2013 are not negatively impacted by cover crops, policyholders may be required to stop haying or grazing at a certain point in the spring and will be required to terminate the cover crop. Some regions may require the cover crop be terminated prior to it reaching the headed or budded stage and other regions prior to a specific date occurring generally in late April or early May.

For policyholders to know when they must terminate any cover crop, or cease any haying or grazing next spring without impacting the insurability of any 2013 spring planted crops, they should contact their crop insurance agent to discuss the requirements contained within the Special Provisions that **will be available no later than November 30, 2012**. Approved insurance providers should notify their agents immediately of this intended action so they can inform their policyholders and assist them in making timely and informed decisions for planting, haying, and/or grazing cover crops accordingly.