



In this edition:

| | |
|---|----------|
| There's an app for that | page 1 |
| Get prepped for hay season | page 2 |
| Weed control in pastures and hayfields | page 3-4 |
| Successfully sprigging bermudagrass in Georgia..... | page 4-5 |

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There's an app for that

By Savannah Tanner
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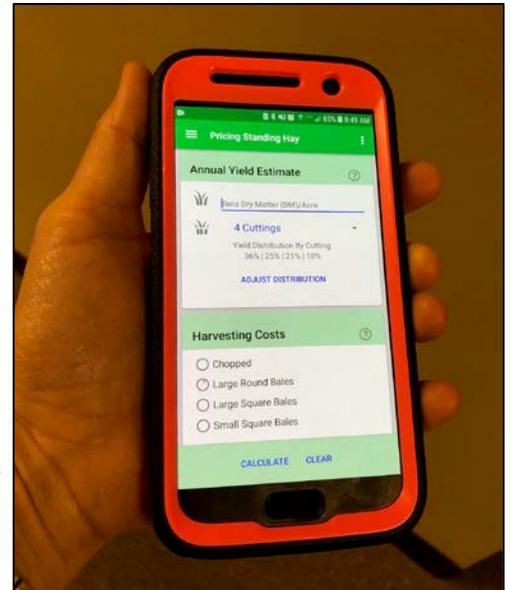
There's an app for that...there's always an app for that. In the midst of an ever-increasing technology world, the agricultural industry is no stranger to smart technology. From irrigation apps to field measuring apps, we see widespread, quick, and "at the touch of a button," farm management tools becoming available in the little rectangle we keep in our pockets. Forage growers too, have apps that exist in the palm of your hand to assist in hay, pasture, and forage management. Here a few that might be useful.

HayMap is a free app similar to Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace where both buyers and sellers can place ads advertising and inquiring about forages around the United States. For buyers, information available on ads can include the species and variety forage and forage quality. From bale size to binding method and fertilizer to irrigation, the producer can quickly advertise all aspects of his production, a buyer may request. For a seller, HayMap allows them to advertise their products before and after baling. Overall the HayMap app makes locating and selling forages easier than ever for livestock producers.

While HayMap is a purchasing and selling outlet, the HayPricing app (available at both the Apple Store and Google Play Store) helps sellers calculate the current price per acre of each cutting while including output costs and losses due to weather and harvest. The goal of this app is to assist hay producers in determining a profitable selling price for their forages.

PastureMap is an all-in-one livestock producer management tool that has multiple functions. These functions include tracking paddock rotation, calculating stocking and carrying rates, and evaluating pasture performance. This compact app also helps farm managers keep and share cattle records, forecast animal gains, and combine EID records to the program. PastureMap, currently available for download on cell phones, tablets, and the computer offers a monthly subscription for different three levels of management. While this app costs, it offers a complete package of livestock and grazing management tools.

The Information Age is here and managing your forages is easier than ever because...there's an app for that.



Get prepped for hay season

By Carole Knight
Bulloch County CEA

As temperatures begin to creep up and spring starts to arrive, it is time to start thinking about the coming hay season. Timing is everything when it comes to high-quality hay production. A pre-harvest inspection of your hay making equipment can help make up valuable time and hopefully cut back on downtime later on. Here are some tips and things to check on before you make your first bale.

Sharpen up. A good cut on the grass reduces leaf loss and prevents stem damage, which can slow plant recovery. Sharpen or replace dull, damaged blades, sickle sections and cutting mechanisms. Also, check the conditioning rollers, adjust spacing, and roll timing as needed. Properly maintained conditioners will minimize drying time.

My buddy “Ted”. Tedders and rakes may not be as mechanically complex, but they still need to be functioning effectively. Look for teeth that are misaligned or broken, replace or bend if possible. Setting the correct pick-up height will minimize leaf loss and reduce dirt uptake.

Don’t bail on you baler. Perform a thorough inspection on your hay baler. This is the centerpiece of your hay making operation and if it is not functioning properly, things come to a halt. Check shafts, sprockets, pulleys and bearings for signs of wear. Inspect any belts and hoses for cracks. Properly tighten chains and belts. The bearings in the baling chamber often cause the most headache for round baler owners. Now is the time to check them, not when smoke is billowing out of the chamber. Check the rollers for any excessive movement or play. Look at tires and check their air pressure. It is a good practice to do a test run by warming up equipment to check for improperly working components.



The squeaky wheel gets the grease. Lubricate and grease any bearings and other moving parts that may have grown dry and stiff during the off-season. Take inventory. Make sure you have plenty of twine, net wrap and or plastic. It also good to have some spare parts on hand to minimize downtime when something breaks. Adequate inventories can save you a trip to town or prevent a complete shutdown.

Benjamin Franklin said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” So many factors contribute to a successful hay season. Don’t let improperly prepped equipment be the factor that slows you down. With your equipment ready, you’ll be prepped for a great hay season.

Looking for more forage information?

Visit GeorgiaForages.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hay and Baleage Short Course
Forsyth, GA March 21-22, 2019

Winter Crop Options Workshop
Tifton, GA April 2, 2019

GA Forage Conference at GCA Conv
Perry, GA April 4, 2019

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Weed control in pastures and hayfields

By Steve Morgan
Harris County CEC

Weeds can reduce the quantity and the stand life of desirable forage plants in pastures and hayfields. Weeds also impact the aesthetic value of a pasture. Therefore, producers may choose to initiate weed management strategies that reduce the impact of weeds on forage production.

The first step in effective weed control is to evaluate the pasture or hay field to determine the source of the weed problem. Soil testing to determine the current nutrient and pH status is the place to begin. After correcting fertility levels, the following things must be evaluated and corrected:

- Stocking rate to eliminate overgrazing problems
 - Pasture rotation schedule
 - Need for additional grazing land
- Prevent scalping and mowing-too-low
 - Correct the mower height in order to leave adequate stubble
- Consider renovation where forage stands are very weak

First, a weed is defined as any plant growing where you don't want it. Therefore, we must begin to think in a broader sense as to what weeds are. A weed can be Bahiagrass or Crabgrass growing in a Bermudagrass hayfield. These unwanted plants are often more aggressive than existing or desired forage species and compete for light, water, and nutrients. In latter stages of maturity, weeds can also reduce the quality and palatability of the forage available for livestock grazing. However, not all weedy plants are detrimental to pastures. In fact, some weedy plants provide nutritional value to grazing animals.

Grazing can be used as an effective weed management tool. Livestock will graze weeds when they are small. In the early vegetative stage of growth, many weeds have nutritive values equal to or greater than the desired forages. However, the forage quality of weeds decline rapidly as the plants mature.

Mowing is especially effective in reducing the amount of weed seed produced by established broadleaf weeds. The mower should cut as close to the ground as possible. Mowing may not completely eliminate weed seed production, since some seed could be produced by plants that regrow from tillers present on grasses below the height of cutting. Also, perennial weeds that spread by underground rootstocks, like thistle, are not effectively controlled by a single mowing.

Another control method includes various herbicides that are available to provide broad-spectrum weed control. When making your selection try to choose a product that will control as many weeds as possible. This reduces the use of herbicides and also minimizes cost by reducing the number of passes through the field. When applying multiple products choose products that can be mixed in the same tank and applied in one pass.

Two popular types of weed control products are pre-emerge and post-emerge herbicides. Pre-emerge herbicide must be applied before the weed seeds germinate. An example of a pre-emerge product is Prowl H2O. This herbicide is used to control Crabgrass in Bermudagrass hayfields. Post-emerge products are used to kill weeds after they have germinated. These herbicides must be used when the plant is actively growing and not simply green.

When using any herbicide, it is important to be aware of the surrounding crops. Drift from many of these herbicides are lethal to other crops like vegetables, shrubs and flowers. Pesticide spray drift is the movement of pesticide dust or droplets through the air at the time of application or soon after, to any site other than the area intended. They should choose a product that will not harm surrounding crops if drift occurs. Drift will vary with boom height, nozzle type, pressure, and wind.

>> Page 4

Weeds cont.

Most herbicides have grazing and feeding restrictions stated on the label that limit the use of the crop for livestock feed. Producers should know and adhere to any grazing or haying restrictions. These restrictions can be anywhere from seven days to one year. Different products vary in their restriction guidelines. Many products that have no grazing restrictions for beef cattle will have grazing restrictions for dairy cattle. Most will also have a withdrawal period before slaughter.

Herbicides can be a useful tool for weed management in pastures and hayfields. They should be used where appropriate and when cost effective. A program that integrates several different control strategies is generally more successful than relying on only one method. Weeds present at the time of herbicide application may be controlled, but if the forage stand is not vigorous and actively growing, new weed seedlings will soon emerge and occupy the bare areas that remain. Thus, without proper use of mechanical control methods and good cultural practices, herbicide use will not be beneficial.



Successfully sprigging bermudagrass in Georgia

By Erin Forte Churchill
Macon County CEC

Improved bermudagrass varieties are often accepted as one of the best grazing materials in the Southeast, but the thought of establishing these varieties through sprigging can send even the best cattle producers running for the hills. It doesn't have to! By following the steps outlined here, you can set yourself up for success with your hybrid bermudagrass hayfield or pasture.

Before even contacting a sprig producer, consider the following steps.

The first thing to consider when preparing to sprig bermudagrass is variety. Your soil type, terrain, and location within Georgia can all influence your decision.

- Tifton 85 is considered the queen of hybrid varieties, with high yields and digestibility, but isn't the perfect option for every circumstance.
- Russell is a highly winter-hardy variety that makes it a prime option for the northern portion of Georgia while also having one of the best root systems of all hybrids. It is significantly less digestible or drought tolerant than Tifton 85.
- Tifton 44 is also highly winter-hardy and well suited for North Georgia and into Kentucky and Virginia. It is usually in the middle of the pack as far as digestibility and is slow to establish.
- Coastal is the first and most common hybrid bermudagrass. It has double the yields of common bermudagrass with similar quality to Alicia. It is not cold-tolerant and prone to winter-kill up toward the mountains.
- Alicia, Callie, Coastcross I, Grazer, Midland, Tifton 68 and 78, and World Feeder are all varieties not recommended for Georgia.



>> Page 5

Sprigging bermudagrass cont.

Once your variety has been selected, a soil test is essential. Soil bags can be acquired from your local Extension office. Based on the results of the test, apply the recommended amounts of lime, phosphorous, and potassium two to four weeks prior to sprigging and till to incorporate. When it comes to planting date, bermudagrass can be sprigged any time between January and July. However, it is strongly recommended that it be sprigged before the grass breaks dormancy. This is true for a few reasons. The soil moisture levels in the late winter are more conducive to successful sprigging than later in the year, and sprigs dug before breaking dormancy have higher levels of stored energy to give them a good start. If sprigging is done later in the year, adequate moisture levels are essential and sprigs planted after July have a much lower chance of surviving the following winter.

While some varieties, including Coastal, Tifton 85, and Alicia, can be established from mature stem cuttings, true sprigs (rhizomes and stolons) are the most surefire way to establish a healthy stand. Sprigs should be dug from pure, well-maintained stands of bermudagrass and planted quickly after digging as vigor will decline after digging. If stem cuttings are used, they should be six to seven weeks old and have six or more nodes. Purchasing from certified bermudagrass growers can increase the chance of establishing a pure stand of a given hybrid variety. A list of these certified growers can be obtained from your local extension agent.

At least 40 bushels of fresh sprigs should be planted per acre at two to three inches deep, unless in heavy clay soils, where they shouldn't be covered with more than an inch of soil. Soil around the sprigs can be firmed with either the press wheels on a sprigging machine or with tractor wheels. If using topgrowth rather than sprigs, scatter tops and disk in before packing the soil with tractor wheels. It is very important with topgrowth to ensure that the planting material hasn't gotten hot or too dry. No-till sprigging machines are available, just be sure to kill the existing vegetation with an herbicide prior to no-till sprigging.

Proper management of a sprigged field or pasture is essential for the first year to ensure proper establishment. This includes not grazing or cutting hay on newly sprigged bermudagrass until the sprigs have spread to cover the soil surface completely. Even then, don't graze or cut to a height of below four inches in the first year. Continue to fertilize according to your soil test and control weeds in your new bermudagrass field, as the newly-sprigged bermudagrass will have a hard time competing with aggressive annual grasses and broadleaf weeds. There are many options to control weeds, including grazing, mowing, and herbicides. Contact your extension agent for current recommendations on herbicide control of weeds in newly-sprigged hayfields and pastures.

There are two diseases that can cause problems in bermudagrass, although they're not major limiting factors in Georgia. These diseases are *Helminthosporium* and *Rhizoctonia*. *Helminthosporium* can result from low potassium levels and will cause red/brown to purple/black spots on foliage and black streaks on stems. These spots can expand and kill the entire leaf. Circular patches of damage will appear in the field. You can prevent this disease by maintaining potassium levels, burning bermudagrass fields four to six weeks before new growth begins every year, controlling spittlebug injury, and removing hay as soon as it is ready. *Rhizoctonia* is a soil fungus that can cause brown patches in the field in hot, wet weather. Generally, a fungicide application is not economical, but avoid excessive nitrogen rates and remove hay in a timely manner.

Improved bermudagrass pastures and hayfields can be quite beneficial to producers in the Southeast. With good management practices and some foresight, sprigging these varieties on your farm can be a fairly painless process. Simply select the variety that suits your soil type and weather conditions, test your soil to assist in preparing a good seedbed, plant good quality sprigs at the right time in the spring, and manage grazing, insects, and disease. Follow these steps, and you'll be bragging about your beautiful stand of Tifton 85, Russell, or Tifton 44 in no time.