

Total Weed Control Boosts Forage, Pasture Returns

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF AGRONOMY

With today's energy crisis, inflation, high grain prices, and the talk of grass-fattened cattle, forage and pasture crops may well be the sleeping giants of modern agriculture. In Mississippi, the value of livestock and their products has increased tenfold in the last twenty years. We have made good progress but the challenge of the future looks ever more promising. For example, only 20 percent of our total pastures (5 million acres) are planted to improved grasses and legumes. In addition, only 10 percent are fertilized and less than 5 percent receive some form of weed control.

These trends can be applied equally as well to other states in the southeast or the nation. Harlow Hodgson of the USDA has reported that

forage and pasture crops occupy approximately half of the land area in the U.S. (1 billion acres). Forages produced on these lands vary tremendously in kind, yield, and quality, but they all have one thing in common: little or no value until market through livestock.

The value of forages produced in the U. S. has been estimated to almost equal the combined cash receipts from soybeans, wheat, cotton, tobacco and sorghum. In addition, forages add tremendous value in erosion control, beautification, and water conservation.

Current forage research programs across the country are stressing the development of packages of technology for the livestock producer. As these soil-plant-animal forage systems

Farm Credit Directors Tour Agway



As a portion of their annual field trip, members of the Board of Directors of the Farm Credit Banks of Baltimore toured the Agway Distribution Center near Elizabethtown on Monday, April 7. Directors and guests are from left (front row) Paul Nay, George Steele, Art Cochran and Ed Hartnett.

(Middle row) Miguel A. Pons, Jack R. Cobb, William Dickinson, Harold Bailey, Hugh Dailey and E. G. Fouse. (Back row) Bill Jackson, Bill Collins, Dan Weybright, Carl Brown, J. W. Korman and Ervin Jordie.

Photo by Bishop's Studio, Elizabethtown

are developed and adopted in on-the-farm situations, producers are indicating that a practical and economical method of weed control is essential to the success of the pasture systems.

These suggestions are further strengthened when we study the results in Table 1. These data represent the average of several pasture demonstrations located throughout Mississippi. One readily sees that a combination of improved forage varieties, good management, and a sound weed control program has allowed stocking rates to be increased by 3 times and beef production to be increased by 4 times over the typical pasture situation.

Another often overlooked concept in a pasture weed control program is that it takes just as much or more fertilizer to grow a pound of weeds as it does to produce a pound of desirable forage.

Table 2 shows the nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium content of some troublesome pasture weeds such as pigweed, smartweed, and ragweed. These weeds accumulate approximately twice as much nitrogen, 1.6 times as much phosphorus, and 3.5 times as much potassium as a desirable forage plant such as corn. In

addition to reducing yields of desirable forage plants by competing for nutrients, accumulation of nutrients such as nitrogen can result in losses of livestock from nitrate poisoning. These two factors alone will more than justify a sound chemical weed control program.

Let's consider that it takes approximately 80 pounds of a high quality forage such as ryegrass to produce the one pound T-bone steak! Abandon the weed control program in your pastures and fencerows, and the pounds of weed infested forage required to produce the same steak may be 3 times as large.

Many livestock producers have suggested that the biggest problems facing most pasture weed control programs are finding time to spray because versified farming operations such as cotton, soybeans, and livestock, and increasing weed pressures resulting from using only 2,4-D in many pasture weed control programs.

Recent development of products such as Banvel and Weedmaster (combination of Banvel and 2,4-D) has made a tremendous impact of the potential of pasture weed control in many regions. These products have the ability to control most 2,4-D resistant weeds

that have become serious pests in recent years. In addition, release of desirable species and chemical changes within the plants indicate that the improved forage quality would pay for the cost of using Banvel or Weedmaster in most pasture weed control programs.

When new products such as Banvel and Weedmaster are intergrated into pasture weed control programs, total weed control in a diversified operation becomes much closer to being a reality rather than a concept.

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Pomona Grange To Meet

The Lancaster County Pomona Grange No. 71 will hold its spring meeting Saturday, April 19 at 8 p.m. at the Fulton Grange Hall, Oakryn. The master, Jesse Wood, will be in charge of the business session. Bob Abato, a representative from the Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. will give a talk on the proposed rate increases, surcharge and fuel adjustment.

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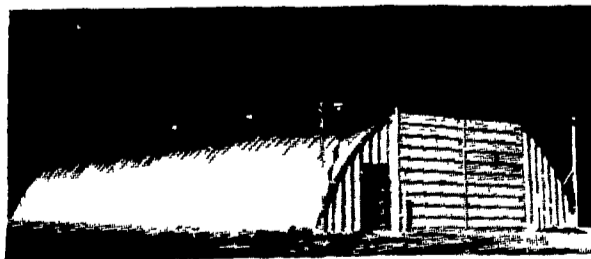
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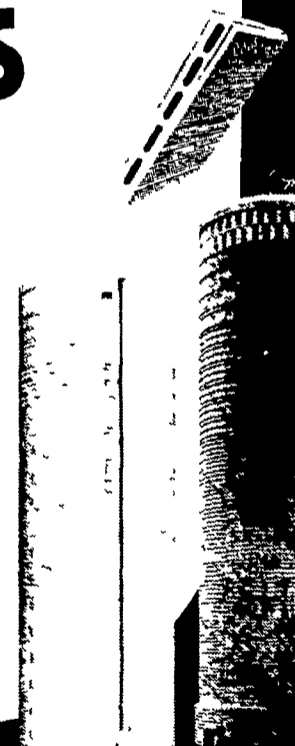
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